

HIMALAYAN PROJECTS vzw



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Namaste dear sponsors and well-wishers,

In the daily press nothing but doom and gloom without much perspective. We, however prefer bringing positive news about our achievements in that seemingly endless enchanting mountain range called the Himalayas.

For 15 years now, of which 10 years as a recognized non-profit organization we want to bring positive things to Nepal. In other words, 15 years of development work with many results: the construction of a few schools, a medical post with a dental cabinet and lab, footbridges, water pipes and solar energy, houses for orphans and people in poverty, a playground and sports fields. We sponsored several hundred students and paid urgent surgeries and a kidney transplant.

Well, it's just "Ripples in an ocean of mountains", but ripples become waves, right? The icing on the cake is the crowning achievement of "The Shree Lali Gurans Primary School" in Chitre as "Best primary school in the Myagdi district"!

The need for a new school complex.



A new kindergarten.

Last year we started the expansion and renovation of a secondary school in the central hills of Nepal. With a subsidy from the province of West Flanders, we have built two new kindergarten classes and a playground.



Official opening ceremony



A safe playground.

Congratulations to all sponsors and volunteers who help realize our dreams, as well as the villagers and teachers, nurse in Nepal who continue to go for it!



Financial news.

After a thorough audit of two ministries, we are proud to be able to issue tax certificates for the next 6 years. If applicable, you will also find it attached here to complete your tax file.

Tax certificate from € 40.00 per year for tax-payers in Belgium.

How can you help us?

Would you like to sponsor us, please go to this web-page:

<http://himalayanprojects.bruggeverenigenen.be/English/Supportingus>

We are currently developing a secondary school in Chinnebas and a primary school with boarding school for 25 deaf children. More explanation further on in this newsletter.



New kindergarten.

During my (Paul Vande Moortel) flash visit to the various projects in April, I was invited to attend the official opening of these classes.

After talks in Belgium with the **Kerun Association** from Belgium that previously also set up some projects in Nepal, I was lucky that two representatives wanted to accompany me to this party. The beautiful and grateful reception of the local children, population and school staff convinced them to join this story so that we can expand and renovate the entire school in one go. After all, with two partners everything can go twice as fast.

So, the classes were lacquered inside and even painted with permanent tables such as Nepalese and our alphabet, series of numbers, and so on. With the enamel paint we can finally wash the walls and keep them clean.

A safety wall was also built around the compound at the back and a beautiful garden was created for the children. This was an unannounced surprise and was particularly appreciated by us. The local community is clearly serious and we are very happy about that!

Now that this first phase of the project has been successfully completed, we have already moved on to the following phases. The new construction of the classes is currently underway for 4 new courses: grades 9 to 12. This allows the hundreds of children to continue to go to this school without having to climb up and down a mountain slope for hours to another remote school, which is no easy task in monsoon time. Now there is no excuse for not sending children to school anymore.

In a next phase we will completely renovate the remaining old classes. All classes will have a new roof, windows and doors. The floor must also be leveled and the walls pasted to get a new coat of paint. Different bright colors were chosen for the inside.

The interior equipment is also being renewed or expanded. For example, we have already bought new whiteboards, as well as a storage cabinet and locker cabinet for the teachers. We hope to set up a computer class soon.

We also wish to devote the necessary attention to quality education.

That is why we organized the visit of a British University employee **Barbara Potter**, who investigated the possibilities for the **Help NGO** from **Great Britain** to have a number of English-speaking teachers teach here every two months every year via homestay.

A British volunteer teacher has already pledged for June and July. We hope to strengthen the content of this school with individual sponsors and to provide the necessary educational material.

Every little bit helps!



Raw construction



Handing over the budget



Inner-view of the building



No more cement boards



Welcome visit



Our new partner reports:

A personal report by Hedwig Racquet and Eddy Goemans, directors of the **Kerun Association**, on behalf of the "Kerun Working Group".

It's been a year since Eddy and I traveled to Nepal during the period when chairman Paul was doing his rounds of the projects over there. With a bit of puzzling we managed to make our program coincide with Paul's.

So together we traveled to Chinnebas, in the back of the jeep, a four-hour drive on unpaved, dusty roads. The reception was very warm. The best of their modest means brought out to show their gratitude for what the non-profit organization does for this community and in particular for the school. A hearty snack, a fresh drink on arrival. The academic session and inauguration of the kindergarten class were heartwarming.

Afterwards we went to visit the classes that were to be rebuilt, but in consultation with the interested committees it was decided to renovate and to build a new one in order to give the school the capacity to offer a full curriculum. The enthusiasm of the village community is so great and proves that we made a good choice in this project. We also want to convey this belief to all who have supported us so far, and hopefully continue to support it. We also convey their gratitude based on the realization that without financial support the development of good education would remain a dream.

The structural work of the new premises will be almost finished and hopefully the finishing will start before the rainy season and can start the renovation of the existing buildings. We are eager to see what the result will be. If we travel back and you want to join us. Contact us..

A word of our joint-venture in Pokhara:

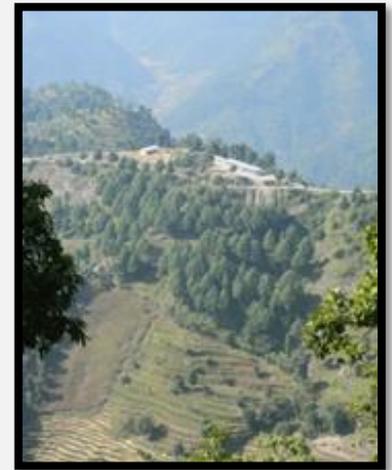
Our training and research institute that we have set up with six other Nepalese partners has now passed its second working year. We have been able to organize various courses such as personality training, CV format and job applications. These courses are mainly ordered by other INGOs working in Pokhara who are very enthusiastic but generate insufficient demand. We were also able to offer various computer-related courses for the local authorities, which was a stroke of luck.

The ordinary individual public, even at private colleges, remain difficult to motivate to pay for courses themselves, no matter how low the registration fee. Profitability therefore remains precarious.

We have introduced a new capital increase and hopefully this institute will finally get off the ground.

Fortunately, we were able to sublet part of the building to an investment bank in order to substantially reduce operating costs.

The secretariat staff is also shared, which certainly improves efficiency. Thumbs up that we will also achieve success in this more conventional "commercial" way.



School-complex in Chinnebas



Hedwig, Paul en Eddy in front of the delapidated classrooms.



Eddy & Hedwig awaiting lunch.



Hedwig, Deepak (our local manager) and Eddy receive a hearty welcome with tika (colour spot on the forehead) and fresh flower garlands.



Proposed Building-site.



Sponsors wanted! Too many projects focus only on infrastructure and one-off actions. So, a lot of constructions decay over time. We want to guard against that! We focus on quality education for everyone!

For this we are looking for a lot of sponsors who want to contribute annually - or monthly - to pay the teachers, to buy school uniforms and educational materials, to provide maintenance for accommodation and school, etc...

Deaf children need education too!

We receive a lot of requests for projects and often have to arm ourselves in order not to become discouraged. We have to put many projects aside for various reasons, but every now and then one stands out where we can go for it. For example, the request came to help a group of deaf children in the Syangja district, south of Pokhara. Until recently, these children tried to attend classes in mainstream education, at the back of the classroom. Later, the families involved rented a house where the oldest deaf people tried to teach themselves.

After a visit, we started the plan to offer the deaf children a full and equal school and care. A subsidy was applied for and approved by the **Province of West Flanders**. After some struggles with a number of people on the school committee who were far too much after the big money from the West, the committee is currently composed of people with realistic expectations and with whom we can work on an equal footing. Waiting for a while with keeping promises has clearly paid off and luckily this did not take too long because after all, it is the deaf children for whom we all do it. A local family has donated a piece of land. The road is between two hairpin bends of a newly excavated - but as always unpaved or paved - country road.



A school has now risen. Two classes have been built and toilets and showers. Another outbuilding that was designated as a teachers' room currently serves as a kitchen as the school is too far away and too difficult for most children to commute home on a daily basis.

During our visit it turned out that the 25 children, courses mixed, follow lessons in one classroom. All 25 sleep in the other room, together with the teachers. The teachers are not recognized and work unpaid. They only get some living expenses from parents. So there is an urgent need for a solution! However, there is no shortage of enthusiasm and sacrifice!



A residence can be built on a second piece of land. There is a water source that is not drinkable but can still provide shower and toilet water. We want to install a water purification device for drinking water. Grants were applied for this purpose.

However, a second part of this project is equally important: a qualitative interpretation of the project.

Standard quality education for these deaf children is our goal!

News from Chitre, Myagdi district.

A **youth center** arrived. For a number of years we have been designing sports and leisure facilities for young people in Chitre. The football field was extended to official dimensions and basket- and volleyball field laid out. We brought steel poles and targets so that we don't have to cut trees anymore for repairs. This year we built a proper youth house. The main building is finished just in time for the annual sports festival. The



Himalayan Youth Club is now the proud owner! We were cordially invited for the opening ceremony.



Together with the locals and youth and thanks to a grant from the Province of West Flanders, we are approaching the completion of this project. There remains the construction of toilets, showers, dressing cum storage space and the installation of a special metal hinge door so that the stage can serve both for out- and indoor programs.



The village also got a road that reaches to the school and the youth house. It is an excavated dirt road that can only be driven with jeeps during the dry season and is therefore rough driving. However, it has become much more interesting for the



local population to supply goods and export their own breeding surpluses. It is also not busy (2 trucks or tractors and a few motorcycles per week) so that trekking tourism does not suffer too much.

Fortunately, as the road is partially joining one of the world's 10 most beautiful walking tours.

The **school** in Chitre is also working hard. Every year we get one or two teachers from English speaking



countries who **volunteer** to lend a hand. They are responsible for the educational aspects of our primary school and that is precisely why the school was chosen as the best in the entire district.

Medical volunteers (doctors and dentists) also visit regularly to check on our children.

We also bought a new **electronic piano** because the Nepalese like to maintain their traditional folk songs.

The new **computers** have also arrived. We are currently looking forward to viable access to the internet, because in these remote areas the population no longer wants to be deprived of all knowledge and contacts with the rest of the world.

In the **medical post** last year we had a visit from Ulrike Peere, a Bruges nurse who did her internship abroad (see her report below). Fortunately, Simon Wydall, a doctor from London, was there at the same time. Sent by HELP NGO from the UK, he supervised the nurse and also thoroughly examined the operation.

A number of pain points were identified, such as hygiene issues. The Nepalese standard is very low in this area and work is now being done on this so that the medical post can show its exemplary function.

New **lab** material was purchased. A portable electrocardiogram device is still on our wish list. Unfortunately, we have few specific sponsors for our medical post and priority must be given to the local nurse's wages and especially to free medicines for the poor population.

In October we had a visit from two dentists who relieved each other for our annual "**Dental Camp**" that lasted two weeks. It



mainly remains extraction work, but if we can guarantee a certain continuity in visiting dentists, we can work much more preventively and preserve teeth.

The power of volunteers!

It is fantastic for the people in the "Himalayan Projects" that we regularly have professionals and volunteers who want to volunteer their time and energy on our projects. In Belgium we often don't realize how well we are doing. When we return to Belgium from a long stay in the mountains, the first topic of discussion is usually the crisis here in Belgium. This is very difficult to understand after all the poverty and problems we saw in the Himalayas. Fortunately, there are many people who are committed! In April 2013, Ulrike Peere, a nursing bachelor's student, did her internship in the medical post in Chitre. **Read here her report of October 2013...**

This internship abroad was a very beautiful and enriching experience. I started with a positive attitude, because I had already had personal contact with Paul Vande Moortel, the Belgian president of the NPO, so I knew what to expect. Still, I was a little disappointed in the first few weeks. Not so many patients came in a day and when they came, the nursing cases were not that challenging. The medical post was already very well equipped, I was amazed!

During my stay in the medical post in Chitre, I had several telephone contacts with Paul, the chairman. These conversations stimulated me to take action in the village. Once I had been there a bit longer, the language was a bit strong and I had the biggest health problems, I was able to respond to this. For example, I took the initiative to teach the children of primary school hand hygiene and how to brush their teeth.

After the first few days, I changed my approach. I should not always compare with the situation in Belgium, but try to understand why they approach some things in a certain way. That made it easier to empathize with the patients' situation and how to respond to it. As mentioned earlier, I have not had any major technical challenges, but after a few days I started to realize that this is not necessary. I tried to give the patients health education (regarding antibiotics, smoking, contraception, ...) and I felt good about it. That felt like my responsibility, because sometimes the patients are quite shy and laughed aloud. The people in Nepal live at a completely different pace than we do here in Belgium. You can easily take this over after a few weeks. I think I could have achieved more if I had continued to live at the "Western" pace. The first weeks I missed the real patient contact, because of the language barrier. After a few weeks this got better because I spoke a few words "Nepali". A 6 month stay would have been fantastic in that regard. By then you will know the language to a large extent and you can keep in touch with the patients and the inhabitants. This would also have made it easier to work out other initiatives, because you then have more information about the residents' health problems.

Because of this internship abroad, I will work much more economically in Belgium. The patients have to pay for everything themselves and do not always have the means to do so. The health care system in Belgium that is so obvious to us is actually a great luxury. And know that we would still dare to complain that it costs us too much money. People in Nepal have taught me to be satisfied with less. They own so much less than we do and yet they are so happy. A major factor in this is the absence of stress. In the beginning I have been busy several times in their "Nepali time", but after a few weeks you are so concerned that you start to think and act like that.

THANKS to all volunteers!

This year, a retired Belgian doctor / dentist will leave for 3 weeks at our medical center in Chitre.

At the moment a new intern has been sent to Chitre by the Hogeschool van Gent (HoGent). We wish them good luck!



Kris and Leen, the dentist and his assistant.



F.I.t.r.: Ulrike, kitchen helper, Simon (British doctor), Didi (Lady of the house) and Pasang (Sherpa guide).

Read more of their stories on our website:

<http://himalayanprojects.brugseverenigeningen.be/English/VolunteerWork>



To live and die in Chitre

People also go to Chitre, an unsightly little village in the Himalayas: a young student at the beginning of his life, a man in the middle of his life and a little old man we know from the many projects he was involved in...



The first boy Dag Bahadur Pun, once one of our students in our first primary school suffered so much... Years ago, thanks to your support, we helped him with a kidney transplant. This was only the third successful transplant in Nepal. Now, 4 years later and only 21 years old, he has succumbed to complications.

Khim Bahadur Garbuja lost his daughter to a heart condition after she had just started teaching at our school. He donated us a piece of land to build our medical post on it. Sadly, he died of the same ailment, while proclaiming the good news in his village that a granddaughter had just been born.



We also had to say goodbye to Khadka Paija, a quiet, always good-humored worker. He was always there to lend a hand for our projects. "I called him the short one" and he called me "the long one", not because of my height because he found me average compared to other "white tourists" but because of my nose. He slept peacefully on a mat in the sun in front of his house, just on the path to school.



In Memoriam, because they were all near to us here in the far away West.

Our NPO actions in Belgium.

Together with various Nepalese associations in Belgium, we held a benefit on February 24 in Bruges with 3 Nepalese singers and Nepalese snacks.

Collecting funds for all our projects is of course essential, but we also believe that raising awareness and raising awareness is important.

That is why we also hold school promotions and workshops, such as in 2013 in the VBS De Leeuw in Zedelgem, GBS De Regenboog in Sint-Michiels and the Sint-Rembert School in Torhout.

In 2013 we attended many festivals with our Info and cooking stand and in February 2014 we were at the 21st Asia Fair & Festival in Wemmel.

New dates: May 24 at FERIA Festival in Ghent; June 7 at Den Bruul for the world party in Leuven (Nepalese snacks!) And June 28 in the Minnewaterpark at 't Feest in' t Park with information and snacks. Any help is welcome!

Namaste and keep in contact!

Join us on a trip to Mustang?



In the spring of 2015 we are already planning a sponsor trip to Nepal and will also visit our new projects in Chinnebas and Syangja. The icing on the cake of this trip is a light but high trek to Mustang.

Interested parties can already register. This helps to take into account the wishes of the fellow travelers. The larger the group, the lower the cost price.

A New Year's wish has come true!

This printed newsletter is sent to all sponsors. More news can be found on our website and / or via email, a cheaper and faster way to communicate.

Our email call to help a boy without feet was answered positively a while ago.

Thank you **Birgit** for taking care of this boy so that he can now go to school carefree. We are now looking for an orthopedic solution so that he can walk soon!

