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dnh brief



DNH

DEUTSCH-NEPALISCHE

HILFSGEMEINSCHAFT e. V.

GERMAN NEPALESE

HELP ASSOCIATION



www.dnh-stuttgart.org

Namaste

नमस्ते

Dear Members and dear Friends of the GNHA,

Those who took on the tremendous challenge of helping to restore the devastated school infrastructure caused by the earthquake, experienced a feeling of sheer desperation during the first half of this year. The money and technical personnel were available, but the blockade, bureaucracy and other barriers prevented us from getting started. And this was also the case for everyone else who wanted to help.

This uncertain and highly frustrating phase that lasted far too long, is now over. In the meantime we have been working parallel at 18 locations, either setting up completely new, earthquake-proof, classroom modules, or repairing existing buildings and structurally reinforcing them.

Now, at the end of the second half-year, the first buildings are being handed over and utilised. Not only we and our private and institutional donors are happy about this, but above all the children who can at last expect proper lessons again in suitable premises. We feel that the interview held by our reporter, Sabine Pretsch, with one of our civil engineers, Raja Babu Dangol, reflects the problematic situation and challenges of the reconstruction work very well.

Meanwhile, the experiments we have successfully completed on building structures and walls made of earth bags, has inspired one of our teachers to rebuild his destroyed home on his own, using this construction method. This should act as a model.

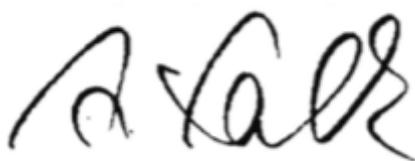
Where something new develops, something old often has to give way. And this is particularly the case where one of our model projects is concerned. Stringent official requirements are creating unsolvable problems for the home for endangered children, managed by PIN (People in Need). An alternative would be to look after these afflicted children at home and ensure them a place at school. For over 15 years we have been supporting Children Nepal in Pokhara, a local NGO that supports the Dalit girls in this way; and still living in their respective homes, this NGO also advises their families and supports them, if necessary.

Particularly proficient in writing is Angela Baumann. For this reason, we asked her to introduce herself. Who hides behind this name, and what does she have to do with the GNHA?

With great sorrow, we had to bid farewell to our motherly friend, Erika Belz, in May. She was the founding member of the GNHA, a Board Member for decades, and finally also an Honorary Member. Erika Belz significantly influenced the development of the GNHA over three decades and remained faithful till the very end.

And we also thank you for your loyalty and the encouragement that you have given us again and again, not least through your donations. We have a great deal on our agenda. It is therefore good to know that you are behind us and are continuing to give us enormous support in the reconstruction measures and in our regular work. All this is only possible together with you.

In this spirit, I greet you with a sincere "Namaste".



Andreas Falk
- President -

Interview held by Sabine Pretsch with Raja Babu Dangol, one of the two civil engineers responsible for the reconstruction work

SP: Which regions and how many schools are you responsible for as regards the reconstruction work?

RD: In April / May 2016 my construction team began the reconstruction work on the schools in the Dhading District. Five locations in close regional proximity were selected there in accordance with the internal co-ordination. Subsequently, a building with two classrooms and two buildings in Kundala in the style of the approved school model could be completed in Kanyadevi. The external paint-work on this building will be carried out shortly. At three locations there were delays in the reconstruction work during the rainy season. Roads blocked by landslides hindered the delivery of the materials. It was therefore not possible at two other places, either (Narayani, Gyanodaya), to construct the outer walls after finishing the steel structures. The foundation has now been cast at the Mahendra Barahi School. In August the repair work could be commenced at two schools in the Kavre District (Janalkalayan and Namobuddha). At these two locations it will be possible to re-use the undamaged supporting structures. Consequently, only the side walls will have to be newly built, with vertical belts and horizontal reinforcements for protection against earthquakes. Furthermore, we have started the work in Singeswari in the District of Sindhupalchowk. There are plans for adding four other locations in the Dhading District, two more in the Kavre District and one more location in the Sindhupalchok District after the rainy season and the Festivals Dashain and Tihar at the end of October.

SP: How many team members are working under your direction? Which specific tasks are being taken over by you and the other team members?

RD: Two site supervisors work together with me in the team. We are responsible for implementing the specifications and for the surveying work. Clarifying and explaining the approved construction model to the school community is important, as well as instructing the local workers and supervising the technical construction work. In addition, we are present during the concrete work, in order to ensure the quality. Furthermore, we are searching the regional market for qualified metalworkers. Since the production of our supporting structures is far more complicated than the production of conventional types, it is necessary to find competent and, above all, experienced workers.



SP: Who carries out the construction work at the schools? Are they villagers or workers from the respective villages?

RD: The workers mostly come from the villages. Normally, construction work is managed by a general contractor who hires workers and organises the material and transport. In order to reduce costs and involve the schools in sharing the responsibility, the School Management Committee was involved in the entire construction process. Their tasks include the acquisition of materials, such as sand, cement and natural stone from the region, as well as assuming the responsibility for local workers.

SP: Who trains the workers in the building construction? Do the workers need special training or a certificate?

RD: In order to assess the qualifications of the individual workers, our team meets up with the respective workforce and tests their proficiency and knowledge. We then ask them questions about our construction model and about the work carried out at an earlier stage. The skills of the workers differ considerably, depending on the location. Some of the workers have taken part in respective training courses and received certificates. These specialists are highly qualified and work independently. Other workers are trained and supervised by us.

SP: How often do you inspect the building sites, and who is responsible and controls the progress of the construction work when you are not there?

RD: There is an inspection plan for the individual locations. I visit these places regularly for inspection purposes. The construction work in the remote areas is inspected by the two other construction site managers. Daily visits there are possible, due to their proximity.

SP: Were you also involved in the building permit process? If so, what exactly were you responsible for?

RD: Together with Kedar, the GNHA representative in Nepal, and the architect, I went to the competent government authority and was responsible, in particular, for explaining the technical aspects. We use three different models altogether for constructing the side walls. Masonry using natural stone up to the horizontal waterproofing level, and then either light-weight materials such as corrugated sheet metal with plywood, complete natural-stone masonry, or brick masonry. Most of the school buildings are now being built of bricks. After the earthquake people lost their faith in building with natural stone; and they think that these stones are too heavy, and that the buildings are therefore unsafe. The half-height masonry is not appreciated either, for different reasons.

SP: How long did it take for the approvals to be granted by the Ministry for Education and the Building Department?

RD: It took 6 months altogether for obtaining the type approvals.

SP: Have the approvals already been obtained for all the schools that have to be rebuilt?

RD: Yes, all the new buildings and repair work have been approved by the competent authorities.

SP: How long does it take to rebuild a school?

RD: If the participation of the School Management Committee is very good, the road transports are possible, and the materials are available, then it takes at least 3 months to complete a building in accordance with the requirements of our approved, two-room module.

SP: In what way does the construction method for the houses and buildings differ from that applied before the earthquake?

RD: Even before the earthquake, the building regulations in Nepal had already contained stipulations on the provision of seismic belts, corner reinforcements and other safety precautions. In most cases, however, these regulations were not applied.



SP: Are the building sites and the newly built schools also examined and inspected by a Government engineer?

RD: We have to report to the authorities regularly on all the building sites. In addition, the schools are to be inspected at least three times during the building phase by a construction engineer.

SP: How many schools do you think will have been reconstructed by the end of the year?

RD: All the six school locations in the Dhading District and a school in the Sindhupalchowk District will be completed within 3 months, i.e. by the end of the year. The repair work on the schools in the Kavre District will also be finished by then.

SP: How long do you think it will take for all of the 40 damaged and destroyed schools to be rebuilt?

RD: That's a difficult question that can't be answered exactly. Firstly, the time this takes will depend on the difficulties occurring during the construction phase. In addition to that, two teams are responsible for rebuilding the schools. I would first have to consult Birendra, the other construction engineer responsible. I would estimate that my team would be able to build about eight more school buildings within one more year, i.e. by the end of 2017.

SP: Finally, I would like to ask you two personal questions. You are in charge of an important task with the reconstruction of these schools. How do you feel about this?

RD: It's a wonderful feeling being directly involved in the reconstruction work! I am very grateful to the GNHA for giving me the opportunity to work in my profession and take part in this reconstruction work.

SP: What do you like most about your profession?

RD: I am interested in all types of building construction work. It's my passion. Even as a child I was fascinated by construction work and buildings. Whenever I went past a building I always had to stop first and watch the workers.

SP: Dear Raja Babu, thank you very much for this interview and for the interesting insights into your work during the reconstruction in Nepal.

Obituary



Erika Belz

25th February 1925 – 5th May 2016

Our Honorary Member, Erika Belz, died on Ascension Day at the age of 92. The fact that Erika was "called home" on that very day, may well be regarded as a good omen.

Erika Belz was one of the founding members of the GNHA and the Deputy President of the Association until 2009. She was also the President for one term of office. After retiring from active work due to lack of strength, she nevertheless still wanted to be informed about the Association's activities, and then expressed her satisfaction and thanks for all that the GNHA had achieved since the very beginning. She had always been a loving companion who showed us her unlimited benevolence and put her trust in us. Her loyalty and faithfulness were unconditional.

We, and a countless number of Nepalese people have profited from Erika's warmheartedness and extraordinary generosity. There was always something very "motherly" about Erika. I therefore believe that this was why the Nepalese loved her so much, and in Nepal she was generally called and known as "Ama" (mother). In Nepal this is the formal way of addressing an elderly lady to whom one wishes to show respect. But in this particular case, it also "hit the nail on the head". She was an "Ama" for many, and also for us.

We mourn the loss of our motherly friend and are grateful to have had her with us. For as long as she lived, she was a blessing for all. And I am sure that she will continue to give us her blessing, from wherever this may be.

Andreas Falk

School education and personal development for the poorest of the poor

The caste system in Nepal had been laid down by law over centuries, until it was officially abolished in 1963. Those belonging to the lowest caste, the Dalits, are considered as unclean and therefore untouchable. For us Europeans this is hard to understand, as they have reputable professions, such as blacksmiths, tailors, barbers, as well as certain musicians, washers, street cleaners and slaughterers. The Dalits belong to the poorest of the poor and even today, they still experience social and political discrimination and hostility in society.

Since 1998 the GNHA has been supporting the Dalit girls in their education and personal development, via the Nepalese Help Organisation, Children Nepal (CN) in Pokhara. This local NGO was founded in 1995 and particularly supports socially-underprivileged children - mainly girls - from poor families. The organisation acts as a counselling and education centre at the same time. 18 qualified and highly motivated social workers look after the children and their families. 115 of the 400 children being looked after at present, are now being supported by the GNHA. The GNHA would like to increase this number, in order to meet the increasing need.



This Help Programme run by Children Nepal, is an excellent example for demonstrating how help can be given in Nepal in a targeted way to underprivileged girls, including support for their families. Particularly worthy of mention is the fact that the children live at home with their family members during the entire duration of their support, and that no extra hostel was built for them, as is otherwise becoming increasingly normal in Nepal. The helpers at Children Nepal know the family and social background of each single girl. The family background is already examined when the children are selected at the age of five to six years, by paying a visit to their home and holding talks with the neighbours. By making regular visits to their homes, any problems arising in the families can be detected at an early stage, and any disturbance in the personal and educational development of the girl concerned can then be countered. Regular meetings with the school management and teachers ensure that any learning problems or unexcused absence from lessons are discussed and clarified.

The girls are supported financially by providing them with their school materials and uniforms, and paying for their school fees, school outings and other activities for promoting their education. The GNHA also contributes towards the personnel expenses of the social workers. In addition, the NGO makes a particularly outstanding contribution - that is otherwise seldom in Nepal - towards the personal development of the young children and adolescents.

During the regular training courses on behavioral issues and career opportunities, the aims in life and aspirations of each single child are documented in a written "Target Agreement". Together with the social

workers, their targets are monitored, corrected, or newly defined in regular, follow-up reviews. Children Nepal thereby attaches great importance to the girls setting realistic and attainable targets.

The Help Organisation also contributes towards integrating the Dalits by holding training courses for the teachers and school management. "It used to be almost impossible for Dalits to enter the homes of others in a higher caste. Having a meal with them, or holding a cosy get-together was unthinkable. Nowadays, it is possible for all the schoolchildren from different backgrounds to sit together and jointly carry out practical work. Positive developments and changes are slowly becoming apparent," so Sharada Sharma who is responsible for the programme at CN.

Sharada, who has already been working for the NGO for 21 years, is able to report on many a successful life story of these girls.

She is particularly delighted about the development of the young lady, Israth. Israth was one of the first Dalit girls to be supported by the GNHA. Today she is working with Children Nepal as a social worker and executive assistant.

After passing her final school-leaving examination, Kunjani Pariwar completed a course of training as a life counsellor and careers advisor. Today she is studying Law in her last semester. After the earthquake last year, she visited the affected regions on her own initiative, in order to support the people there and give them some encouragement.

Sabine Pretsch

A house built of earth bags

It is mid-September and in one week's time Keshav Badal will be moving into his new earth-bag home with his wife and children. A home with walls made of bags filled with soil, is unfortunately still a rarity in Nepal. This construction is considered earthquake-proof. The single-storey house with two rooms, each of 9 m² is in the direct vicinity of the Margarete Müller-Bull Training Centre in Badalgaon, a small village in the Kavre District. Keshav is a teacher at the school there, the "Binayak Bal Lower Secondary School", which is supported by the GNHA. His own home was destroyed by the earthquake.

Together with the three GNHA workers, Keshav attended a 3-day practical training course for building earth-bag houses. It was organised by a New Zealand NGO. He gained further practical experience during the construction of the impressive retention wall below the Training Centre. And during this phase he acquired the know-how that he needed for building his own house.



The earth-bag house was built in two months and the GNHA contributed half of the funding, since it is an innovative construction method, and the house is intended, at some later stage, as the homestay accommodation for participants in the MGML training courses. A foreman and 6-7 helpers were engaged daily for constructing the walls. In 12 days this work was finished. The purchased bags were filled with a suitable soil mixture, as is available everywhere in Nepal, and then stacked in a staggered pattern on top of each other. The earth bags were prevented from slipping by using intermediate layers of barbed wire. Furthermore, simple steel rods were integrated for additional stability. The walls were coated inside and out with a mixture of cement and clay. The steel grid for mounting the roof of corrugated steel, was welded in the village. There are even a water supply and electrical installations.



"I think it is a good idea that the house was built in the traditional style using natural materials. This contributes particularly towards a good indoor climate throughout the entire year", Keshav answered when he was asked why he built his house using this construction method.

Sabine Pretsch

Remarks on the origin of the aphorisms by Angela Baumann, found in the German Nepalese Help Association calendar

"And you can earn money doing something like this?"

My former school friend frowned and trotted out some of the aphorisms that she found in the previous year's GNHA calendar. And I was still brooding over the present photos.

"Can I take this one?"

The little table calendar easily found a place in her strictly limited luggage.

"What for?"

Her friend had two grown-up, musically-gifted daughters, and she was quite sure that as a three-some, they would be able to produce far better texts, and in the case of my ice-cold-anticipated death, could seamlessly take over the job, so to speak.

And like any other author in such a situation, I was immediately struck by a feeling of tremendous uncertainty.

And I have been sitting here since 1996, i.e. for 20 years, studying pictures every year, always of a similar kind, depicting the life and countryside of Nepal, racking my brain - and other people can come up with aphorisms, just like that?

Even my son, when he was still at grammar school, "supported" me with the following text:

"The children in Nepal
before reading at all
already face icy jags
threatening their necks!"

Firmly implanted in my brain, this text persistently keeps coming back to me - I would have forgotten my own a long time ago, if I hadn't saved them on my PC.



Every year I print out the ever increasing number of texts, to avoid making any repetitions. There is a danger of this happening, if certain themes are constantly repeated:

First of all, the Himalayas: at sunrise and sunset, snow-covered, stone desert, people in front of and between high mountain peaks and deep valleys. And then the stupas, adorned with prayer flags blowing in the wind, together with statues of the different gods, agriculture from rice to pomegranates and water, lots of water.

Well, the Arctic, Mediterranean or other European photos are not likely to come from Nepal, regardless of who takes them and how impressive they are.

A phone call - it's my friend. Self-critically she tells me an excellent example of her family's efforts: The higher the mountain, the deeper the valley.

That's where the problem lies, and finally I realised it.

Basically, it is a question of truisms and philosophies of life that we are all familiar with and can relate to ourselves - I have never been to Nepal.

I can only understand, express and relate a general text to visual subjects; and how do the finally authorised texts differ from being commonplace?

Actually, they only differ in the way I present my basic impression aroused by the picture, right at the end.

Poetry, irony or political awareness - there is always a hint of these, and they elevate the texts by a decisive hair's breadth above platitude and banality.

I sincerely hope that I am not the only one who sees things this way.

Our new Nepal Calendar 2017 with aphorisms by Mrs. Baumann can be ordered on our website or directly from Wunsch Druckservice (Tel.: +49-711 780 30 51).

We would like to express our thanks

to all our donors - children and adults, private and institutional - who are supporting us alongside our work in the current projects, with donations for the reconstruction work after the earthquake.

They are generous and give all they can; only in this way will we be able to master the enormous, financial challenges.

Since the last dnh brief (GNHA Newsletter) appeared we have again been pleased to receive donations from those wishing to go without presents on either a happy or sad occasion.

In this connection we would especially like to thank:

Mr. & Mrs. Faisst, Mr. & Mrs. Hallbauer, Ute Hermes-Licher, Gudrun Hummel, Birgit Kollmann, Mr. & Mrs. Metz, Ruth Platz, Heide Rolfs, Ruth Storckenmaier and Hannelore Vosswinkel.

Our thanks go to Roland Brand, Ulrike Drasdo, Christine Reuter, Mr. & Mrs. Rohrer and Peter Schöderlein, who were able to transfer considerable donations to the GNHA during the last few months as a result of their presentations and events.

Our sincere thanks also go to Charly Kutasi who, with a concert held by the live band "Crosstalk", not only managed to collect donations for the GNHA, but also made people conscious of the fact that the consequences of the earthquake have by no means been overcome yet.

Special dates and latest information

For the latest information on special dates and our projects, please see our homepage or Facebook page.

www.dnh-stuttgart.org

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19.-20.11.2016:

GNHA Nepal Bazaar

We invite you warmly to visit our traditional Nepal Bazaar.

Saturday, 19th November, 2016: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Sunday, 20th November, 2016: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Place: Firma Trelleborg, Handwerkstr. 5-7, 70565 Stuttgart-Vaihingen (in the Cafeteria, Hofgebäude 1st floor)

11.12.2016:

Nepal – Multivision Reportage by Dieter Glogowski

"Nepal – Acht – Der Weg hat ein Ziel": Charity Event for the benefit of the GNHA.

Sunday, 11th December, at 4 p.m., and 7 p.m.

Place: Lindenmuseum in Stuttgart

For advance ticket sale, go to GNHA website: www.dnh-stuttgart.org

18.3.2017 – 07.04.2017

Nepal project trip

For information, see website: www.dnh-stuttgart.org

Registration deadline extended to 1. 12.2016

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BANK ACCOUNT FOR DONATIONS

Commerzbank Stuttgart

IBAN DE 03 6008 0000 0182 4971 00, BIC: DRESDEFF600

The GNHA is a recognised, non-profit organisation.

Donations are tax-deductible. Donation receipts are issued, as a rule, at the end of the year, but also earlier upon special request. Last certificate of tax exemption of 30.09.2016.

