

22

November
2021

dnh brief



DEUTSCH-NEPALISCHE
HILFSGEMEINSCHAFT

DNH

GERMAN-NEPALESE
HELP ASSOCIATION

Über 40 Jahre Erfahrung

Namaste

नमस्ते

Dear Members and dear Friends of the GNHA,

the facts require us to devote some space in this dnh brief also to the distressing issue of corona. There are two positive things to note: firstly, thanks to the amazing willingness to donate in May, we were able to help very effectively, and secondly, at the moment it looks as if the pressure of infection in Nepal is continually decreasing. This can also be seen from the fact that tourists are slowly but surely making their way back to the promised land of trekkers, mountaineers, the friendly people and the immensely diverse culture and nature. We all hope that there will be no relapse.

The focus in this letter is on Children Nepal's coverage. After more than 20 years of support, we wanted to have the programme audited and evaluated by an independent consulting company. The results do not surprise us, because we are and always have been completely convinced of the excellence of the programme. However, it is good to know that others can also confirm this impression. It was correct to steadily increase the number of girls supported over the years, i.e. from 30 at the beginning to 260 now, and to continue to refine and expand the key funding areas. Here you can read a summary of the evaluation.

Who was the spiritual pioneer of Children Nepal, and how did his own biography motivate him to invest his energy in children's rights? In his article, Ram Chandra talks about his youth in the village, where prejudiced attitudes and traditions still prevail. He paid special attention to the most disadvantaged group in Nepali society, the Dalits outside the caste system, and among them the girls. Sushma Giri is not a Dalit girl; she was just orphaned at an early age. Nevertheless, she has been able to experience the caring and kind-hearted people serving at Children Nepal. She also experienced encouragement there to go her way with self-confidence.

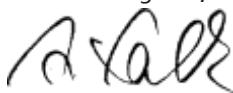
In September, the General Meeting took place under corona conditions. In the run-up to the meeting, the statutes were fundamentally revised and put to the vote. One point was that the number of mandatory board members was reduced from five to three. The last 10 years have shown that only a few feel the urge to play an active part as a formal board member for a longer period of time. The reduction in the size of the board in no way precludes the cooperation and contribution of honorary members of the Association. This is still more than

wished for from the current, three-member board.

The amendments to the Articles of Association were approved by the General Meeting. Furthermore, Mrs. Heide Rolfs was appointed as an honorary member of the DNH after almost 30 years of membership in the board, due to her invaluable services to the Association and our work in Nepal.

I hope that our topics interest you and I sincerely wish that you will continue to accompany us with true dedication. Please stay healthy.

With kind regards,



Andrew Falk
- President -

My life in the pandemic

- by Sushma Giri (see picture on the title page)

Namaste! I am Sushma Giri. I work as a science teacher at the Global Collegiate School in Pokhara and live with my sister who also works as a maths teacher at the school. Children Nepal (CN) became a focal point and safe haven for us, for which we are immensely grateful.

My father died when I was very young. Fate was kind to us, however, because a sponsor paid for the school and boarding school for me and my sister. Our school is considered to be one of the best in the region. It became our home because my mother, who worked as a carpet weaver, died of a heart attack when I was 11 years old. My sister was only 7 years old when we became orphans.

When I finished school and was allowed to go to college in Pokhara, my sponsor introduced me to Children Nepal and said,

"Here you have people whom you can always turn to and who will stand by you when you need advice and help. But also show your willingness to help and put your skills at the service of this organisation. Your English is very good, you can translate and you can help the girls with their homework." So I also did that with great joy and learned so much even at Children Nepal. I participated in personality-building programmes and assisted the Director of CN as a co-facilitator at events, or tutored the younger ones. This is how my desire to become a teacher grew in me. After completing my bachelor's degree, I even got the chance to do a one-year teachers' training course at the renowned Rato Bangla Institute in Kathmandu.

When Covid 19 hit us and the lockdown was imposed, all the schools were closed. Like many others, I struggled with isolation and economic uncertainty. The looming threat of unemployment and homelessness was frightening for me. I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown as I was wondering how I was going to survive and find money for food and rent during this lockdown period.

During this difficult time, Sharada Sharma contacted me and inquired about my situation. She is the Senior Programme Officer in Child, Youth and Family Services at CN and an incredibly kind-hearted woman.

Salvation came when CN, along with the Suryamukhi Handicraft Cooperative, provided me and 254 other families in great need with food packs, emergency medicines, masks and disinfectants.



The CN staff, Sharada, Ramesh Subedi and Mahendra Poudel were constantly visiting families in different communities and giving them advice on how to get through the pandemic situation safely. Although I am now no longer

directly involved in CN's programme, CN reached out to me and gave me a relief package of food to keep me from misery during this difficult time. I am glad to have such a caring organisation with a big heart as a contact person. During the lockdown, CN took in 43 street children and orphans, provided them with food and gave them a temporary, safe place to stay. CN's helpful and selfless staff, care for the very weakest in our society. I am so happy and grateful to have found a new, big family in CN. It is a place of refuge and inspiration that gives me

a sense of security that I can always count on in difficult times. And they can count on me.

GNHA corona aid in the 2nd wave

- by Dr. Richard Storkenmaier

Nepal had been struck by a severe second corona wave in May, which originated in India. Large political events and religious festivals, careless behaviour and political ignorance had encouraged the spread. There were up to 10,000 new infections and about 200 deaths every day, with a presumably very high number of unreported cases. The health system was hopelessly overwhelmed and the hospitals overcrowded. There was a lack of basic medical equipment and, above all, of oxygen. The international aid only got off to a sluggish start, partly because India, which was just as badly affected, was more in the media spotlight.

Aid supplies from Germany were not possible due to a lack of flight capacity. In this situation, the GNHA joined forces with other aid organisations working in Nepal and formed a local purchasing group. Thanks to an amazing willingness to help from our donors and members, we were able to procure 30 efficient oxygen concentrators worth €34,550 locally for the Health Posts in our project areas, and deliver urgently needed medicines, and protective and hygiene equipment worth almost €20,000. The COVID department of BIR hospital, where our pharmacy for the poor is located, received protective equipment worth €2,450 (see picture). Hygiene kits were distributed to the corona patients in BIR Hospital.

With the renewed lockdown, the poorest people were again deprived of their livelihood. We supported 150 households with over 600 people in Tibetan camps with food aid worth € 7,500. In Pokhara, our Children Nepal project provided 254 Dhalit households with over 1,150 people with food and hygiene articles worth over €14,000. On our website you can find a film about the distribution of food in the Tibetan camps on the front page under Infos.



Fortunately, the number of infections has been steadily declining since June. The health system is no longer overburdened, and everyday life is returning to normal to a large extent. The schools, including those we support, are back to normal and we have been able to resume our teachers' training programme. After a long break, a Health Camp will take place again in November.

Travel to Nepal

- by Dr. Richard Storkenmaier

Travel to Nepal has been possible again since the end of September.

Unfortunately, the travel alleviations for the particularly important autumn season came very late. Thus, the hope remains that tourism, which is so important for Nepal, will pick up again in 2022. You can find more information about travelling to Nepal on our website.

Self-liberation from caste mindset and behavior

- by Ram Chandra Paudel

I grew up in a village. My family was poor but belonged to a high caste. I can still clearly remember a situation in my childhood. I was perhaps 4 years old and approached the tailor who was sewing clothes for our family on the verandah at our house. I touched him. My grandmother hissed, "Don't touch him. Come here." The tailor sent me away saying, "Don't ever come to me again". Grandmother sprinkled me with water and said, "Now you're pure again. Watch the Damai working from a distance. He belongs to an untouchable caste". I was confused by this, and also by the fact that my mother, although it was winter, gave him something to eat outside the house. After he had eaten, he cleaned the plate thoroughly on

his own and placed it in the sun to dry against the wall of the house. Later, my grandmother cleaned this clean plate again with hot ashes and water so that it would be "pure".



In my village there were a lot of families that belonged to the lowest caste. The Dalits include the Damai (tailors), the Sarki (shoe makers) and the Kami (blacksmiths), among others, i.e. craftsmen of systemic importance, whose work is valued and whose products are needed by everyone. In the traditional village society, however,

they were not allowed to touch people of the upper castes, such as Brahmins and Chhetris, or to use the same well, etc.. Neither were they allowed to enter their houses and temples. When I started school, the schoolchildren from the lowest castes sat separately from the others in a corner of the classroom. But during the breaks we played together. I made friends with them; they were good at physical activities while I was good at theoretical subjects. I helped them with their homework, because we had to expect physical punishment from the teacher if we came to school without bringing our homework with us.

My parents knew about these contacts, so when I came home from school I was only allowed into the house after I had been sprinkled with water and was thus ritually 'pure' again. In times of peak agricultural work, day labourers from the Dalit caste helped in the fields. They chased me away if I approached them. At the age of 11, I underwent the Hindu ritual of Bratabandah. Over a long period of time, I had to get up early at 5 a.m., bathe at the well and then perform a puja (worship) to 5 deities. During this time, I became aware of my status as a high-caste Brahmin and from then on, I asked for the purification ritual myself if I had contact with Dalits.

I had Dalit playmates throughout my school years. In the 8th grade I had to go to another school. The steep walk there alone took two hours. At home I was given popcorn and roasted soybeans to take to school with me. There was a small tea stall near the school. My Dalit friends provided tea and vegetables, and I shared my food with them. And so we ate together in secret, and I did not care about the rituals any longer. Later, at the college in Pokhara, where we also developed deeper friendships with fellow students from the Dalit caste and supported each other's professional strengths, my caste

prejudice increasingly gave way.

As a teacher at an ordinary village school which, of course, also had Dalits, you were treated with respect by all the village inhabitants. If you visited the families of the pupils, you were offered water or even tea, but never by Dalit families, even if I only asked them for a glass of water. Every time I was told that it would be a dreadful sin for them. At school we tried to critically question this behaviour, but it is so ingrained in village society that it is still commonplace. But I was pained more and more by the unjust treatment that was inflicted by society on the Dalits.

In 1995 we founded Children Nepal (CN) in Pokhara and I took over the management. Our goal was to support children and families who were living under difficult circumstances. In 1998, this led to an educational programme for Dalit girls. We wanted to make it possible for them to attend school, and we tried to support their parents in earning a regular income. The GNHA was on board from the beginning; it would not have been possible without it.

I offered a Dalit couple the possibility of running the canteen in our office. But they hid behind excuses and refused the offer. Eventually they accepted the job offer. When some higher-caste colleagues came to know that Dalits were now in charge of the kitchen, they stopped drinking tea and coffee and eating food from our kitchen. Once there was a 5-day teachers' training course in the CN conference hall. We offered the participants tea, snacks and food. Some of them turned down the offer saying that they were observing fasting days. This was an outright lie. They did not want to eat or drink anything because it was prepared and touched by Dalits.

For 30 years now I have been living in Pokhara with my wife and children, and at first, even in the larger family together with parents, sister, brother and his wife. My own wife Sharada also comes from a Brahmin family. Within the framework of CN, we together support people and children in need. In our home, Dalit friends often join us at the table. I think to myself that this 'table community' and our support encouraged my own sister to follow her love. She married a man from a low caste and moved with him to his village in eastern Nepal. My relatives were strongly opposed to this and advocated a forcible separation. Sharada and I, however, stood by my sister and accepted her choice.

When my son got married to a girl from the lowest caste of the Newar community, the relatives, my mother and my brother were angry with me and my wife, and broke off the relationship. It took two years for the matter to calm down. In the meantime, the mindset in our family has changed for the better. Thanks are due to the good encounters and experiences we have with the Dalit community through CN, which radiate

to others.

I have learned from my life experiences. Here are some of my insights:

- It takes a long time for an upper-caste person to change. I have been aware of this since my childhood. But it took me more than ten years to come out of the deep-rooted behaviour in me. I continue to work on changing my relatives and my community.

- There is an acceptance of subordination among the Dalits. They have to work actively on it, in order to overcome this submissive behaviour.

- The upcoming generation has opportunities and a good environment for fighting against discrimination of all kinds. We need to motivate and value them.

- Laws and rules against discrimination are necessary tools for implementation. But rules and laws alone are not enough; we have to start with our very own attitudes and behaviour. Inter-caste marriage is one way to overcome discrimination.



Mahendra, Sharada, Sangita of CN

Evaluation of the Dalit Girls Support Programmes of Children Nepal (CN)

In the Nepal population with its Hindu majority, the caste system influences the life of every individual. The caste is formative for the individual identity. Participation and involvement in social life depend very much on which caste one belongs to. It determines access to educational opportunities, public services and natural resources. Among the most disadvantaged groups in society are the Dalits. They make up about 14 per cent of the population. Being a Dalit means living on the downside of life in every aspect, but the most unfavourable fate is, if you were born a Dalit girl.

Against this background, we have been supporting the Pokara-based organisation Children Nepal (CN) since 1998 with the aim of enabling these girls to attend school, strengthening their self-esteem through various measures and, if necessary, also providing them with vocational training. The Dalit Girl Education Programme (DGEP) is based on the assumption that educated Dalit girls have better social and economic opportunities.

CN is part of various different networks and has even taken the lead in some of them. This role has made it possible to cover numerous topics related to child development. The DGEP programme is one of the clear beneficiaries of these alliances. CN is active in this environment, to provide children with their constitutional rights.

Whereas initially only a small group of 30 girls received support from the GNHA, 260 girls currently benefit from the programme. We have invested more than half a million euros in the programme since it began. The budget of supporting the girls has increased considerably, not only due to the larger number of girls supported, but also because of the further development of the programme and the general increases in costs.

It was therefore time to have the programme audited and evaluated by an independent institution. Samatamulak Bikash Tatha Manaw Sansadhan Pvt. Ltd (SBTMS) was entrusted with the evaluation. The study covers the entire period of our sponsorship since 1998 until today. The final report was submitted in October 2021.

The evaluation was to provide answers to the questions as to how far the programme has been successful in empowering socially outcast and economically marginalised Dalit girls. The weak points and the sustainability of the programme were just as much in focus, as the need to adapt to changing circumstances.



Our Dalit Girls

The results presented in the evaluation were drawn from various sources. An important element was the database created for the study with 20 different criteria, in which all of the 528 girls supported so far are recorded. Interviews with randomly selected girls and their families provided deeper insights. The annual reports as well as a series of formal and informal interviews with CN and the GNHA staff further classified the findings.

The evaluation team ascertains that the DGEP is a flagship programme of CN. However, to date there is no master plan for it. At first sight, this may be seen as a shortcoming, but this was not the case. The reliable external support from the GNHA and the permanent dialogue have been significant for the demanded, gradual differentiation, and the expansion of the programme. The addition of further groups of girls always heralded a new phase, which was accompanied by innovative building blocks for the empowerment of the girls and their families.

Components are, for example, "group savings", which has now established itself as a fixed item of all the development projects. The significance of such a platform goes far beyond the financial commitment. The members who meet regularly to pay the monthly instalment, often discuss topics of social interest. The girls' needs are also negotiated there and discussed with the CN team, the parents and the teachers.

A very important component is the psychosocial counselling for the girls and their families. Most of the girls and families have gone through difficult times, e.g. financial stress, abuse, discrimination, domestic violence, family fragmentation, etc.. Many of the girls interviewed said that psychological counselling from trained individuals had enabled them to overcome their fears and express their views to a wider public. In addition to the direct support for educational materials and fees, the school

enrollment campaign, regular visits to the school and home, and the health camp for prevention and medical care, the emergency assistance has also contributed to the achievement of the programme's objectives. The support frees both the girls and their parents from financial obligations, thus allowing the girls to focus on their education.

The realistic shaping of a "life plan" is the purpose of the workshop "Goal Setting", which has produced several results. The girls learned to work towards a concrete educational and professional goal, based on their interests and abilities. In addition, the workshop teaches them that they have a choice and do not have to submit to social coercion or unpleasant traditions.

Unfortunately, financial reasons, school problems and social commitments forced some of the girls to drop out of school early. During the evaluation, affected girls acknowledged that the CN staff did their best to persuade them to give school priority. Some of the school dropouts were thus enabled to learn a skilled occupation in selected small enterprises.

There were always girls whose performance at school was above average and who therefore aspired to higher education. However, the costs involved jeopardized their dream of a further qualification. In response to this hardship, financial support was provided to a limited number of girls. This prospect seems to have encouraged many aspirants to improve their performance. The programme now supports 40 girls a year on their academic journey.

CN realised at an early stage that educational efforts for girls develop positively when the respective family is financially better off through income-generating activities. Easy access to finance was needed to finance micro and solo enterprises run by the mothers. The answer to this was the establishment of the "Suryamukhi Agriculture Cooperative". A start-up injection of funds (Euro 1,500) provided by the GNHA, resulted in an institution with 185 members and a turnover of Euro 34,000 (2019/20) within 5 years. The officially registered cooperative is owned and managed by the parents and is perhaps one of the key building blocks to ensure the success of the Dalit Girls Programme in the long term.



The DGEP programme, under the CN Department for Youth and Family Welfare, has a commendable system for project management. The study team found that the department performs the various tasks in a satisfactory manner.

The allocation of geographical areas for the care of the individual girls by the staff has proved to be very effective. During the survey, all the girls confirmed that the staff regularly visited their school. In addition, the girls were also visited at home or contacted by telephone, even during the pandemic. Studies and experience have shown that girls who are given an education develop a certain resistance to discrimination. Educated girls make well-founded decisions and are therefore less likely to marry when they are young. And even more important, they take their future into their own hands. Some of them have now earned a good reputation in society and present themselves as equal participants who are building a better future for themselves and their families. An encouraging number of them have improved the financial status of the family.

The DGEP programme has shown that education for girls requires more than just school attendance. The other measures for sponsoring the girls have been instrumental in making them feel safe, supported and able to make something of their lives, even if they come from the discriminated section of society. However, female members from an underprivileged community still have a rocky road ahead in order to overcome the long-lasting cultural and structural barriers. Therefore, it is also correct for the GNHA to continue providing targeted support only to the girls of the Dalit community. The economic neediness, of course, remains a selection criterion.

The evaluation study concludes with a quote, "Investing in girls' education changes communities, countries and the whole world" (Little Sister Fund).

The study resulted in suggestions and various recommendations, which were discussed together with representatives of the target group and the staff of CN and the GNHA. They now need to be implemented and secured.

Board elections



S. Spiegl, A. Falk, Dr. R. Storckenmaier (from left to right)

At the General Meeting in September 2021 in Stuttgart, Andreas Falk (President), Dr. Richard Storckenmaier (Vice President) and Sabine Spiegl (Treasurer) were confirmed in their board positions for the next three years.

Heide Rolfs and Brigitte Menrad did not stand as candidates again. We express a big thank you to all the outgoing board members for their commitment.

Honorary membership for Heide Rolfs

Heide Rolfs was appointed an Honorary Member by the AGM due to her special services to the Association and its projects for the benefit of disadvantaged groups of the population.



After 27 years, Heide Rolfs is now retiring from her active time on the board, but continues to support the GNHA with the Margot Busak Foundation, which she established. We owe her a great debt of gratitude.

GNHA bazaar

Unfortunately, our Nepal bazaar cannot take place this year, either. Therefore, we can only refer you to our online shop (<https://nepalbasar.de>), where you can stock up on bazaar products. Please enter the keyword "GNHA" on the order form; a part of the proceeds will then go to the GNHA projects.

You can also order the Nepal coffee from our coffee supplier online at <https://moreofcoffee.de>.

Further shopping possibilities can be found on our website <https://dnh-stuttgart.org>

GNHA calendar

NEPAL IMPRESSIONEN 2022



Deutsches Nepalische Hilfsgemeinschaft e.V.
Über 40 Jahre Erfahrung

You can order our beautiful Nepal calendar 2022 as a wall and also as a mini table calendar on our website (<https://dnh-stuttgart.org>), or alternatively collect it from our office after prior arrangement.

GNHA membership fees

Please remember to remit your 2021 membership fee, as there will be no invoice.

Fee for single members: 24,-EUR/year

Fee for family members: 36,- EUR/year

Ideally, you should give us a SEPA mandate. You can download the form for this on our website under the downloads or contact the office.

E-mail address

Please help to save resources by letting us know your e-mail address, if you still receive this dnh brief by post. We would like to switch to e-mail dispatch.

We say "thank you"

to all of you - who place your trust and support in us

and who have answered our call for help during the corona wave so promptly and generously with donations.

Furthermore, our special thanks go to Heide Rolfs and Marlene Rehn who, on the occasion of their birthdays, waived gifts and instead asked for donations for the GNHA. We also received donations on the occasion of the death of Dr. Erhard Witte.

Here, too, we would like to express our heartfelt "thank you" and our deepest condolences to the relatives. We would like to thank Ralf Ledl for his readiness to donate a part of the proceeds from his book sales.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to Helmut Henschen who promotes the GNHA by passing on our dnh brief and asks his trekking friends for donations.

Another big "thank you" goes to the company Trelleborg for its generous support.

We have been able to achieve a great deal in the past months with your help. Please continue to stay by our side, so that we can also continue to work towards our common goal in the future.

Dates and news

For news regarding dates and our projects, please visit our homepage, Facebook page or Instagram: <https://dnh-stuttgart.org>

www.fb.com/Deutsch-Nepalische-Hilfsgemeinschaft-117494788313902/

Instagram: [dnh_stuttgart](https://www.instagram.com/dnh_stuttgart)

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BANK ACCOUNT FOR DONATIONS

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The Association is recognised as a non-profit organisation. Donations are tax-deductible.

Donation receipts will be issued after the end of the year, but on special request also beforehand.

Last certificate of tax-exemption of 11.08.2021.

