

NCEF GYAN

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NEPALESE CHILDREN'S EDUCATION FUND

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gyan: *n.* knowledge acquired
by direct perception

HIGHLIGHTS

NCEF Expands to Palpa

NCEF has expanded its help to Palpa, a mountainous district located west of Kathmandu. The decision was made on January 20, 2006. Mr. Yuba Raj Ghimire has been appointed the area coordinator for this new region.

A few days after this decision was made, Palpa's district headquarter was attacked by Maoists. The communication and transportation lines were disrupted for some time, unabling our area coordinator to correspond with NCEF. Now the lines have been reestablished and we have been able to keep in touch with the region.

A New Area Coordinator Appointed for Patan

Mr. Suresh Devkota was appointed as the new area coordinator for Patan on January 25th, 2006. The position was held by Mr. Ravi Thapa, who resigned on January 19th, 2006 to spend more time with his family.

NCEF Student Selection Committee

The selection committee has made progress in devising student selection criterias for the new academic year. It has finalized the basic eligibility criteria for students. The basic financial criteria now specifies different family income for households. Seventy-five percent attendance is also necessary for any renewal of financial assistance. This year, the coordinators will be asked to also fill out a community information questionnaire so that we have a better understanding of the areas and to enable the committee to compare the applicant with the rest of the neighborhood. The application form was finalized and sent to the area coordinators on February 2, 2006. This year, NCEF is providing sample forms that will serve as a guide to our coordinators while they are filling the forms. Forms are also available in Nepali.

More information on the basic criteria and the forms can be accessed from the "Inside NCEF" link from the home page under "Application and Selection."

Quick Links:

"Selection Criteria and Procedure"
http://www.nepalchildren.org/selection_criteria.html

"Application Procedure"
http://www.nepalchildren.org/app_procedure.html

(Our future issue will contain more information regarding the Selection Committee, its work, and also interviews with the Committee members.)

WHAT ARE CHILDREN DOING?

Suraj likes going to school and he enjoys being with his friends. He also likes class assignments.

Bhirki enjoyed participating in a drawing competition and loved visiting a zoo.

Dinesh is happy about doing well in his exams and getting good results.

Prasansa finds interest in learning songs in her school.

Laxmi was excited about securing third place in her school's badminton tournament.

ABOUT NCEF

NCEF is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to develop the potential of disadvantaged Nepalese children through education. Need-based scholarships are provided to deserving students who would otherwise be unable to attend school. Our social workers in Nepal meet regularly with the selected children and their parents to assist in each child's development. We dedicate our resources to each NCEF child until they complete high school (twelfth grade).

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NCEF PAMPHLET

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Interview with Dr. Maheswor Kafle

Dr. Maheswor Kafle is the coordinator of Campaign for Education (CE), a branch of the NCEF that performs field operations in Nepal. He has been helping with communication and coordination between the US board of the NCEF, the area coordinators, interns and other volunteers working in Nepal. Besides volunteering for NCEF, as a physician, he has devoted a lot of his time helping in rural health camps. He recently moved to the United States and continues his involvement with the NCEF.

Q. Tell us a little about yourself.

I am a Nepalese physician interested in helping kids. I grew up in a sub-urban environment in Kathmandu and did my schooling despite limitations. I had made good use of my limited resources to go to medical school. When I was done with medical school, I always had the desire to help people in need. After graduation, I started getting actively involved in a lot of social service activities — health camps in remote locations and free health service in the rural areas. This made me more used to social service and NCEF gave me one more platform to help wherever I can.

Q. What was your motivation for working with the NCEF?

I was motivated by my friends (especially Mr. Omprakash Gnawali), who started the organization, their dedication, devotion and persistent desire to help our kids despite their busy schedule. I could not just stand away. I was compelled to help.

Q. What experiences have been meaningful to you while working with the NCEF?

Good experiences –

- Seeing NCEF students pass the SLC (School Leaving Certification) exam and go to college, which would not have been possible if NCEF were not there. It gives you a lot of satisfaction when you meet these kids.
- Mother of five kids presenting me with a pack of Nepalese ghee when I told her that her daughter was selected for the NCEF scholarship.

Bad experiences –

- Meeting a poor “dalit”¹ guy, who was working as a porter in Banepa Bus Station a week after the selection



committee decided not to award him the scholarship. (Kavre, March/April 2004)

- Mustang’s headmaster yelling at me when I asked him to submit the monthly reports. (His point was that when there were twenty other scholarship providing organizations which sought no reports or just annual reports, why should I be the only one nagging him for *monthly* reports). (September 2005)
- Rejection of CE constitution, which was already approved by the NCEF board, by the Chief District Officer (CDO) in Katmandu. If I didn’t change the constitution, the CDO would have gotten mad, if I did, the NCEF board would have gotten mad. (August 2005)

Q. What improvement do you think will be helpful for volunteers and children in Nepal?

More children should get the benefit, and it has to be “Nepal” children’s education fund rather than “Katmandu” children’s education fund. We need a great deal of change with the volunteers. I suggest hiring some paid staff members so that things can run more smoothly. The internship program for the St. Xavier’s students should be reviewed—this is taking 50% of the Katmandu coordinator’s time.²

CE should handle a couple of the areas in Nepal so that NCEF in the US can raise funds. Our target should be to give our children the skills to live (in addition to sending them to school). We might consider having correspondence with the middle level technical schools in Nepal so that we might be able to send out post SLC students to these schools.

Q. What other activities, besides NCEF, are you involved with?

I am a Physician, and I have recently been accepted into a pediatric residency program in the US. So I am working towards certification by the American Board.

Q. What similarities and differences have you found in volunteering from Nepal and from the US?

In both places, people get astonished and ask me why I am volunteering and not going for another job (medical job). It is difficult to answer! In fact, a bulk of calls that I get from NCEF volunteers in Nepal is related to medical stuff and not NCEF!

Communicating in Nepal is very difficult; people don't have access to Email and Internet. Cell phones are non-existent or expensive and don't have voice-mail. You have to plan two weeks ahead to organize one meeting. In August 2005, I did all this to schedule a meeting with Kathmandu Coordinator, Kathmandu volunteer and St. Xavier's professor. But still, the meeting was cancelled, because it was "raining heavily." I have not worked in fundraising, but except for that, NCEF work in the US is easier as compared to that in Nepal.

Q. How different have you found living in Nepal and the US?

In Nepal, it is easy because you have a lot of support: a good network of friends and family. The US is very isolated (except for emails). So this might explain why I might turn more productive when I go back to Nepal. If I had been in the US in the pre-internet era, I would have gone back to Nepal in less than a month.

Endnotes:

¹ A member of a lower, or "untouchable" caste.

² Interns from St. Xavier's College in Kathmandu volunteer in many NCEF field activities in Nepal. The college requires the interns to submit a report, with which they need area coordinator's help. Such an added responsibility gives less time for coordinators to perform NCEF activities.

2006 FUNDRAISING METER



\$4750

MAKING DONATIONS

□ Online:

www.nepalchildren.org/donation.html

□ Checks:

Make checks payable to:

Nepalese Children Education Fund or NCEF

Mailing address:

Nepalese Children's Education Fund

P.O. Box 380061

Cambridge, MA 02238-0061

Questions?

Website: www.nepalchildren.org

Email: contact@nepalchildren.org

THANK YOU!

OUR BENEFACTORS

We recognize and honor those who have contributed towards our children's education in this page.

www.nepalchildren.org/benefactors/

We appreciate your continuous support to NCEF!

It only takes a \$100 to put a child through a year of school.

Student Home Visit Report



Surakshya

Surakshya, an eight-grade Kathmandu student, has been receiving an NCEF scholarship since the sixth grade. Without NCEF's help she would have had to drop out of her school solely because of her family's financial situation.

Her father, who is the main supporter of the family, earns only about US\$30 per month working as a newspaper vendor. Her mother used to sell noodles and candies on the streets before her health problems forced her to stay at home. After paying for house rent, which is about US\$18 per month, and for food and miscellaneous items, her parents do not have much left to spend on her and her two sisters.

Her elder sister is in the twelfth grade. She was awarded a scholarship from her school until the tenth grade. Her earnings of about US\$15 per month from tutoring help her to pay for her secondary education (11th and 12th grade). Surakshya's younger sister, who is in the fifth grade, also receives a scholarship from her school. Her parents, therefore, do not have to pay for their educational expenses.

Surakshya has not only struggled with her family's low income, but also with her own health problems. "She is the weak daughter of the family," says the NCEF volunteer who visited her family as "she has a heart problem." However, she is strong despite her poor health. Her mother told the volunteer that she is a serious daughter who doesn't talk a lot. She takes her schoolwork seriously and is always eager to study. Although no one has to tell her to study, her parents have been, nevertheless, very encouraging by creating a good environment at home for her to study.

Her teachers also praise her good manners and politeness. She is one of the most disciplined students in her class and one of the smart ones. Her friends also enjoy her company because she is very polite and always helpful.



GETTING INVOLVED

Why?

- To make a lasting difference in the lives of children.
- To be a part of an exciting team of interesting and dedicated volunteers.
- To put your spare time, no matter how little, to good use.

How?

- **Join** our announcements list!
- Help fundraise money for NCEF scholarships.
- Help with the administrative aspects of NCEF.
- Take part in discussions to ensure NCEF is increasingly effective.
- Help expand NCEF to new areas in Nepal
- Become a field volunteer in Nepal.
- Help lead NCEF by running for a position on the Board or Executive Committee.

NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE

To access past issues of our newsletter, please visit the following website:

www.nepalchildren.org/newsletters/

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