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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PROJECTS ABROAD NEPAL



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British Volunteer Michael Anslow Experiences life at Community Based Rehabilitation Centre in Nepal

My four week placement at Patan Community Based Rehabilitation Centre was a life-changing experience that I will never forget. It is fantastic that such an organisation exists in Nepal to benefit those who suffer with disabilities. I was sad to learn that it is common for disabled individuals to not be accepted into the Nepalese society. This is why I believe Patan CBR to be such a rewarding and fulfilling placement, as you know it supports such a worthwhile cause.

Patan CBR has a physiotherapy centre, where they focus on improving mobility in patients. This is essential in the wider goal of aiming to improve their independence. They also offer classes for vocational learners, which focus on improving their basic Nepalese, Maths and English. In addition to this, children practice home skills, such as candle and envelope making, which is incredible to witness. Patan CBR also offers classes for those who suffer with severe autism and Asperger's. These classes focus on engaging the individuals to interact with one another, through exercises like songs, dancing and hand/eye coordination games.

The staff members were always very helpful at Patan CBR and were happy for the volunteers to alternate between the classes, allowing you to build up good relationships with the children. There was a real community spirit atmosphere at Patan CBR, and I found it incredibly emotional to say goodbye to the children when my placement finished.



My fondest memories of placement at Patan CBR were the enthusiasm that the children showed throughout every minute of each day. They were so keen to learn, which was incredibly inspiring to witness. I hope to have brought back some of their enthusiasm into the UK. Working with the children on a day to day basis has shown me how lucky and privileged I am to have the quality of life that I do. While they have far less than me, the children are happy, fun and full of energy.

I found the children to be incredibly appreciative to me as a volunteer. Each day I was greeted with a 'Namaste' accompanied by a bow of their heads. I won't forget the moment when I gave them some pens and paper - it was incredible to see that something, which I easily took for granted, brought so much happiness and joy to their lives.



If you're looking to work hard and have the energy to really focus on these children, I would certainly recommend volunteering at Patan CBR.

Amazing How Generous People Are! This month's donations by Alex Court

Since the last newsletter we've had some incredibly generous volunteers! Even though they came to Nepal and gave lots of their time, they wanted to give more.

Pro teaching volunteer Sabine Eide from Norway was placed at the Clark school and decided to sponsor a child with an annual payment of \$150. While there were many eligible children, it was decided that her generous donation would go to a child named Rossani who is 3 years old and in the nursery class.

Teaching volunteer Adam Silfvander was also at Clark, and he decided to get new blackboards for the classrooms. After talking with the principal, it was decided that seven new blackboards were needed and Adam made a payment of \$400 to cover it. As of now one of the blackboards has been installed, and rest have been ordered. The school has students aged between 2 and 13yrs old and all will benefit from Adam's kindness.

On the other side of Kathmandu, Iris van Dam saw the money she had collected from friends and family could be put to good use at the Nutritional Rehabilitation Home (NRH). While she volunteered at the Peace Academy School, she decided to donate to a different placement where the money was needed more urgently.

NRH is a free centre for malnourished children and one of their parents, but the centre cannot cover transportation costs. Iris decided to donate \$650 and most of that will be used to transport 41 children to the centre and receive treatment and



education. So far 20 children have arrived from a village outside Kathmandu and are receiving treatment. The remainder of the money will be used to install 2 bed bars which will make sure the youngest patients don't fall out of the beds.

Donations have also been happening outside of Kathmandu. Physiotherapy volunteer Josh Mason was placed in a hospital in Chitwan, and when his parents paid him a visit they brought a donation of second-hand clothes and \$150. Their generosity will be used to buy new school books for a home for vulnerable children and the Nutritional Rehabilitation Home in Bharatput.

In the conservation project in Ghandruk, two volunteers have also given money to support a women's group. Andy Simpson from the UK (top centre) donated \$223 and Kiana Zeppa from Australia (top right) donated \$230 – an impressive total over \$450! The women's group is working to make the area free of plastic bottles, and the money will be used to educate the women on better recycling and water sanitation methods. Another volunteer Larz Vant Hoff (top left) donated books and crayons to help at the local school. He bought them all the way from where he lives in Bali! The women show how grateful they were for the help by showering the volunteers with garlands of flowers:



All these donations are really appreciated. We are now running a book collection scheme where volunteers are encouraged to bring books for young children with them when they come to Nepal. Teaching the importance of reading at a young age is important in Nepal as many children grow up with illiterate parents. Any help is appreciated.

Thank you!

Leopards in the Jungle: The Thrilling Conservation Project in Nepal by Simon Klingel

As a child, Simon enjoyed bird-watching with his grandfather. The forests around his native Heidelberg have some beautiful buzzards, and the birds fascinated him: “I’ve always been amazed at the magnificence of nature,” says Simon, “so when I saw the chance to live in the Himalayan mountains for 2 months and wake up with the sound of birds and the views of some of the world’s most spectacular mountains I couldn’t turn it down.”

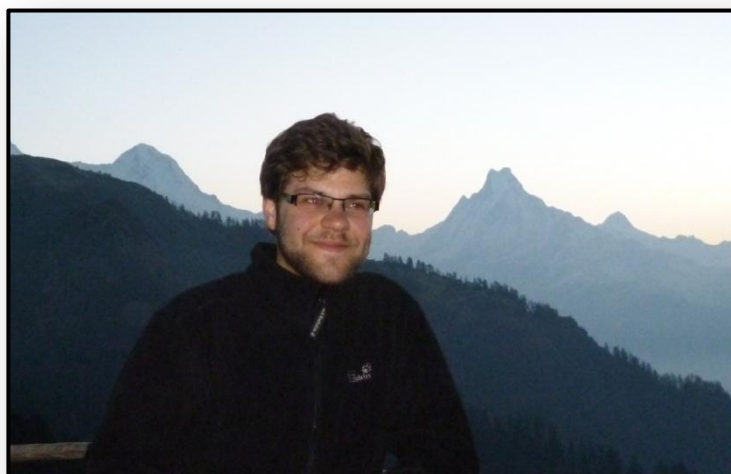
While Simon was curious about Nepal, it was the conservation project in Ghandruk which motivated him to travel all the way from Germany. As a volunteer he has engaged in all sorts of outdoor activities, but his favourite is called the transect line: “We work with a team of expert conservationists who survey the jungle areas around the village of Ghandruk and find an area which is in need of study,” he explains “We then craft a small path through the area, and install hidden cameras with movement-sensors on them to track which animals live there. This helps add to the body of knowledge about the jungle - it’s really rewarding work.”



Most animals and birds are of interest to Simon, but he is really passionate about big mammals “Leopards are such magical animals – so majestic in the way they move. So when one of the camera-traps that I had help install captured a leopard I was so excited!” he says “The thought that I was in the same spot as a wild leopard just hours before it is simply awesome.”

Simon is currently on a gap year after finishing school at F &U Heidelberg, and wants to go to university

in September: “A great thing about being out in nature, surrounded by mountains is that you get time to really think,” he says “When I came I wasn’t sure what I wanted to read at university, but having had the time here to think I’ve made up my mind to study Media and Communications. I’m really excited.”



This realization is not the only one he's had since arriving in Nepal. The conservation project is physically demanding and involves lots of trekking; "The first days in the project were very tough, and I was sweating so much," he explains "but I've become much fitter during my time in Nepal, and learnt how much I enjoy a physical challenge. It's been a great way to lose weight and feel good about myself."

Volunteers at the conservation project stay together at the Namaste guesthouse high up in the Himalayas: "Living with such an international group of people has been really eye-opening" says Simon "during my time in Nepal there were some volunteers from The Netherlands and, even though it is my neighbouring country, I've learnt a great deal about Holland from the guys and made some great friends!"

While Simon spends some weekends down in the nearest town – Pokhara – Simon is sure that he feels happiest surrounded by mountains, and fresh air: "Having the snow-capped mountains around me is such a brilliant feeling: it's a calm like no other, and I think the experience of being surrounded by the outdoors is something everyone should try."

Staff Introduction: Teaching & Care Coordinator Heather McDaid

Namaste!

My name is Heather and I'm the new care and teaching coordinator here in Nepal. I'm originally from Donegal, Ireland so I'm thrilled to be living and working in the very exciting very busy city of Kathmandu. I graduated with an international degree in Anthropology from an amazing university called Maynooth and I loved every minute of it. I spent a year studying in the University of Arizona as well which was a great experience, and I got to do a year's worth of fieldwork for my thesis. This won't be my first time living in Asia, as I spent a year working as a volunteer English teacher in rural Thailand. Every second of my experience in Thailand was amazing, and I left a little bit of my heart in all three of the schools I taught in. I've been lucky enough to travel around a lot of Asia, and in my last job I worked for a ski and snowboarding company so I got to see a lot of Europe as well. I love snowboarding (of course) and I'm a huge drama fan - acting, directing, and teaching you name it I love anything to do with drama. I'm also a qualified music teacher so I hope I can share lots of teaching ideas, games, songs and other great activities with the volunteers!



Helping Out at a Health Camp by Josh Warren from Australia

I had only briefly heard of these health camps when I was presented with the opportunity to be a part of one. I was four weeks into my physiotherapy placement in Chitwan and ready to see something new, so when I heard we were to leave that very Friday, I felt the timing could not have been better.

Many of these camps are one day events, but as this particular project was to take place 4 and a half away in an area called Lamjung, we would need to stay the night.

The camp was to be set up at a local secondary school, a place with appropriate facilities, but still a good 30 minute walk from the nearest town. I even heard that some patients would travel over 3 hours to get there!

The excitement of the camp began with the journey there! I got to enjoy the constant thrill (some would say fear) of being in a Nepalese school bus as it tackled some of the roughest and steepest roads I had seen so far in Nepal. Sometimes people would evacuate the bus as the driver attempted some intense hand break starts. I however had complete faith in him, and stayed on (for emotional support, of course).

The final part of the journey to our home base was made on foot. We followed a small path skirting the edge of paddy fields, past a few rustic looking farm houses, until we reached the school.



As I made my way into the dusty school yard I looked around at the old brick buildings which would house our work stations. Paper signs hung out the front. My eyes followed around the square of buildings- Orthopaedics, paediatrics, gynaecology, surgery (not sure what that entailed), dental (ie. The tooth removal station) and finally my eyes fell upon a small physiotherapy sign out the front of one of the rooms. Our current equipment: 2 tables with a thin blanket on each, as well as some pillows.

Regardless of our lack of resources, it was quite empowering to be able to help patients with nothing but your hands and your knowledge.

The camp ran in a particular order, with doctors assessing the patients first, and then sent them to their appropriate stations for treatment. As I'm still a student I was keen to mainly observe my seniors and assist when necessary, but as the crowds grew outside our station's door, I was required to take on my own patients with little or no help from the others. It was quite scary but also exhilarating and gave me a sense of accomplishment seeing these patients on my own. We had two wonderful medical students from Chitwan Medical College Hospital (CMC) who helped with translating, and between the 3 physiotherapists and 2 translators, we saw almost 50 patients in 1 day!

The locals were very intrigued by us, and we learnt to get used to seeing at least a dozen faces peering through the windows at us (they clearly had no understanding of privacy). As the day wore on their shyness disappeared, and many a child came inside to give us a friendly greeting. By the middle of the next day I was discovering how these kids liked to dance, and they were discovering how much I like attempting to sing (much to their amusement).

It is difficult to tell what real benefits are made from us coming to these remote areas. Unfortunately, word is that most patients only come for the pain relief medication, and care very little for the other services provided. Many a time I felt very sceptical leaving an old lady with a set of home exercises, questioning if she really knew/cared about what I was telling her, even with a translator by my side. However, I feel that at the very least, patients are being made aware that physiotherapy can be used to help, and even if only one patient went away that day remembering ways to help improve their physical abilities, then I think the camp was still of benefit!

I had no idea what I was missing out on until I went along on this camp. It was such a unique and worthwhile experience, and just a great way to further explore and understand this incredible country! Oh, and who could forget the 3 hour sing-along on the bus trip home- gotta love that Nepalise spirit!

