

Nepal Dental and Village Development Project, Nepal
RAWCS Projects number 152/2005 and 66/2007-08
April 2011

Report on a visit by dental and project volunteers.



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DENTAL CAMP 19-25 APRIL

The main purpose of the dental team's visit was to assist Community Health Development Society (CHDS) Nepal to conduct a 5-day dental camp at Kalikasthan in Rasuwa district. One day either side of the dental camp was taken up with travel. The Australian team also provided professional update support to the Nepali team by conducting discussion and demonstration sessions in the evenings at Kalikasthan and in Banepa after the camp.



On the road to Kalikasthan

This camp was supported by Mr Matthew Swait of the travel organisation World Horizons, and Cranbrook School, Sydney, who had raised funds to pay for CHDS's expenses. Mr Balam Neupane who works with Matthew, has a family home near Kalikasthan and helped with local logistical support. A Cranbrook trekking group of students, parents and teachers, led by Matthew and Balam, arrived in Kalikasthan at the end of their week-long trek, and met with the dental team just as we were starting the dental camp.



Cranbrook crew listening to Bishnu

Kalikasthan

The dental camp was set up in the Kalika Community hospital, which had originally been established in the late 90s with the assistance of the Australian embassy in Nepal, Rotary and American volunteers. It had been used as a health centre previously by ADRA, including a dental clinic, but was overtaken by Maoists during the uprising years and used as a base for them. It now has only 2 full time health staff and is hoping to gain further support to have a visiting medical doctor and other health programs. The RAWCS/CHDS dental camp was set up in a large ward room just inside the front door on the ground floor.



Kalika Community Hospital

The dental treatment focussed on restoration of teeth, with some extractions and cleanings. Of 372 people attending for dental care, there were 976 total procedures: 381 fillings, 201 pit and fissure sealants, 181 tooth modifications (on baby teeth, to lessen the risk of spreading decay), 113 extractions, 26 scalings, 51 consultations where the only necessary procedure was the delivery of oral hygiene advice, and 23 medicine prescriptions. One case of suspected oral cancer was referred to Kathmandu for follow up. Many of the extracted teeth showed signs of chronic and long standing infections, and several people needed treatment for previously traumatised and untreated teeth. Obviously these situations indicated a lack of access to dental care, and we hope to continue some support for this location with future visits.



Erin and Renu



Sunil and Erin



Ross and Matthew



Brita and Ross and Bishnu



SM on extraction duty



Sabita and instrument sterilisation



Don't look



A novel use of string to keep his loose teeth in place



Evening discussion session



Gita and Kalika health staff

Issues

- CHDS's drills unit is getting quite old and really needs replacement; this unit was left with the team by Dr Robert Gammal after he finished working in Pokhara
- Ditto their suction unit
- The new health registration authority in Australia, AHPRA, charges \$50 for a certificate of good standing which is part of the documentation necessary to obtain temporary dental registration with the Nepal Medical Council (NMC). The NMC then charges \$80 for registration that is only valid for the time of the dentist's stay in Nepal. This is rather too expensive for providing volunteer services in a period of less than two weeks. SM has put in a complaint with AHPRA, and the Volunteer Committee of the Australian Dental Association will also consider this matter at its next committee meeting in August (SM is a member of this committee). We hope to obtain a waiver of this fee in the future for people conducting humanitarian work in other countries. The NMC fee is beyond our control, but SM will consider taking this up with the NMC, to at least consider extending the "temporary" registration to a 12 month period.
- If future dental camps are conducted in the same location, it would be good to link in with one or two local schools to work with the kids and teachers in providing dental care and dental health education, and to conduct dental education sessions for health staff.



Ross's rooftop birthday party, Kalikasthan



VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

After the dental camp, Paul Pholeros arrived and worked with CHDS and SM on the feasibility of taking the sanitation project to another two villages. Paul and Bishnu visited the villages and met with some representatives, and also worked on toilet design modification to try to reduce construction and labour costs. Since our April visit, Bishnu and his team have visited the villages for further discussions about project planning and costs, village participation, and to explain the workings of septic and biogas waste systems.

We plan to extend the “teeth and toilets” concept as a package, so as well as improving sanitation we will also address oral health needs in the next village/s.

Back in Bhattedande, the village has started a credit cooperative savings scheme where householders contribute 100Rs per month. The focus has been initially to involve the 58 householders who were recipients of the project toilets. By April 34 families had signed up, and the local coordinators were having discussions with the rest of the families. They anticipate these funds, as well as earning interest, will be used for projects as necessary in the village, including the maintenance of the toilets. This will be on top of the funds allocated by Healthabitat (Paul's company) to train two village women to regularly inspect existing toilets and advise on cleaning and maintenance.



Bishnu and Paul meeting with villagers regarding the next toilet project

SCHOOL DENTAL PROGRAM

Thanks to funds provided by the International College of Dentists (ICD), there has been a daily school based toothbrushing program in Bhattedande's school since 2007. The ICD recently agreed to further funding for three years which will provide toothbrushes and toothpaste for the brushing program as well as two dental camps per year, delivered by CHDS and focussing on dental prevention. CHDS also ensures teachers are kept up to date with issues related to supervision of students in the brushing program, and conducts teacher training sessions on oral health education.

SUPPORT FOR BHATTEDANDE SCHOOL STUDENTS

We (friends and Paul and myself) are now supporting 13 children in the school by contributing towards their school fees. Mr Prem Lama, Chair of the Himaljyoti School Committee, Bhattedande, ensures all school age children attend the school and arranges for sponsorship by "foreigners" where necessary so that no one misses out because their family is too poor to pay the school fees. I ask sponsors to support the child until he/she leaves the school at Grade 8 (the school's limit), as Prem has experienced difficulties in the past when sponsors just drop out.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to the staff and committee members of the Kalika Community hospital for allowing us to conduct the dental camp, and to the students of Cranbrook school who worked hard to raise the funds for the dental camp.

Thanks to GC Australia, Ozdent and Nordent for support with donated dental supplies.

Thanks to the Australian team members and of course, as always, to our Nepali counterparts, hosts and friends. Listed below.

Australian team

Dr Ross Mackay, dentist
Ms Erin Commins, dental therapist
Ms Brita van Diermen, dental practice manager
Dr Sandra Meihubers, dentist and Rotarian
Mr Paul Pholeros, architect

Nepali team - CHDS Nepal

At Kalikasthan

Mr Bishnu Shrestha, dental assistant
Mr Sunil Napit, dental assistant
Gita Shrestha, dental nurse and staff nurse
Renu Thapa, dental nurse
Sabita Shrestha, sterilising assistant

In the CHDS office

Mr Jayamangal Baidya, logistics support
Ms Punam Kayastha, finance manager

Bhattedande Village

Mr Prem Lama
Mr Surya Lama
Mr Laxman Lama
Mr Bikram Lama
Mr Ashish Lama
Mr Som Lama
Mrs Kanjimaya Lama

Sandra Meihubers
8 June 2011

All photos by Bishnu Shrestha and Sandra Meihubers



Goodbye from all at Kalikasthan