

Nepal Village Development Project. RAWCS Project Number 66/2007-08

Report on Team Visit 20 September - 5 October 2015

This project has three main target areas: village and school based sanitation improvements, dental care in these locations and other areas as identified, and reconstruction after the devastating earthquakes in April-May this year.

Dental Volunteers

Mr Mike O'Connell (MOC), General Manager, Critical Dental
Dr Sandra Meihubers (SM), Dentist and Program Coordinator

The 2 Australian volunteers arrived at the time of the signing of Nepal's newly formed (and many years in the making....) constitution. In a country where many regions are still struggling to recover from the earthquakes earlier in the year, this provided some political distraction that subsequently led to crippling and ongoing fuel, cooking gas and food shortages. More of this later in the report.

Dental Camps

Dental camps were conducted at two locations:

Shree Himaljyoti School, Bhattedanda Village, Kavre District
Shree Jalapadevi School, Bahunepati, Sindhupalchok District

These locations are also the focus for the sanitation projects. Toilets (septic and biogas) were constructed in Bhattedanda, and construction is currently under way for girls and boys toilets at Shree Jalapadevi school, under the guidance of Paul Pholeros (PP) from Healthabitat. PP was in Nepal for a few days, checking on the sanitation works and working with the villagers and SM to plan for post-earthquake rebuilding.

Planned dental visits in May had been aborted due to the earthquakes, with the project focus swinging instead into earthquake relief.

The target groups for dental care in the September-October visit were the school children and their families, plus the teachers. The dental program has been looking after the Bhattedanda kids since 2008, and the program is just starting in Bahunepati.



Shree Himaljyoti dental camp and kids

Basic and essential dental care was provided in the dental camps, working with the local dental team of : Mr Bishnu Shrestha (Program Coordinator), Dr Biplob Adhikari (Dentist) and Mrs Gita Shrestha (Dental Nurse). MOC was invaluable as a Dental Nurse as well as technical and equipment advisor. SM worked on the registration/screening desk, ably assisted by a dental student in Bhattedanda and by Bien Shrestha in Bahunepati.

The table below lists the services provided at the two locations:

Location	Total examined	Fillings	PFS*	Extractions	Scaling
Bhattedanda Day 1	38	75	11	8	0
Bhattedanda Day 2	46	67	17	11	0
Bahunepati Day 1	40	80	5	36	0
Bahunepati Day 2	64	90	18	22	5
Bahunepati Day 3/4	53	91	18	20	4
TOTAL	241	403	69	97	9

* = Pit and Fissure Sealant, a preventive coating to prevent decay on a tooth surface

Proportionately the Bhattedanda population required fewer extractions than the Bahunepati population. This could be a positive outcome of the ongoing efforts by the dental teams in Bhattedanda, as well as the school based toothbrushing program.

Oral hygiene advice was provided to patients in the camps and Bishnu will return to the schools to implement the ongoing daily toothbrushing programs, funded by the International College of Dentists. PP and a team of architecture students worked on a design for toothbrush storage earlier in the year, and we hope to have these units in place in the next month.



Dental camp at Shree Jalapadevi School, and the remains of a tooth that was beyond saving

Dental Future Directions

The Nepali dental team will work with local partners in Kathmandu to provide monthly dental camps to poor and marginalised people, especially those who are still homeless after the earthquakes, and regular camps to the schools and families in the sanitation project villages.

SM met with Mr Dinesh Singh, a former ADRA staff member who is now working with UNICEF as an Emergency WASH Officer (WASH = Water Sanitation and Hygiene). Dinesh through UNICEF is working with local agencies looking after the displaced and homeless people in the 14 districts affected by the earthquakes. As well as the hundreds of thousands of people in rural districts there are some camps in Kathmandu where up to 4000 displaced people are still living. We hope to work together to help where we can.

Sanitation Program Works

Works were well under way at the Shree Jalapadevi (SJD) School for the school toilets, which include sinks and an area for toothbrushing.

PP has coordinated with World Skills and IAPMO (International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials) to bring skilled plumbers from Australia (Andrew Whalan and Justin Bilske) to work alongside local plumbers Lok Tamang and Dorje Lama, and the local construction support crew.



Toilets taking shape at SJD, and plumbing team, from left: Lok, Andrew, Cam (friend of Justin), Justin, Dorje

Earthquake Relief and Future Works

After PP and SM's earthquake relief efforts in May - providing tin sheets for kitchen and house shelters, cooking stoves and emergency household supplies, and temporary classrooms at Shree Jalapadevi School - PP and Healthabitat have been working on a method of strengthening rebuilt homes to make them more earthquake resistant. Negotiations are currently under way in Bhattedanda village to commence reconstruction works.

Another school in Sindhupalchok district has requested assistance with rebuilding school toilets destroyed in the quakes, and the sanitation/dental teams are investigating the possibilities of working with this new project site.



Bhattedanda villagers are still doing it tough but new works will start after the Tihar holidays

Border Blockades and Fuel and Food Shortages

The country is being brought to its knees by border blockades stopping the supply of fuel, cooking gas and food from India. This is related to internal protests by groups in Nepal unhappy with regional divisions introduced in the new constitution, which they believe will further disempower them. Tied up in this are the ongoing uneasy relationships with the Indian Government.

The end result is a deeper negative impact on those still struggling to cope after the earthquakes, and in fact on the whole country. The inconveniences we faced in trying to find vehicles to move us about are insignificant when compared to the hardships faced by those who are without jobs, shelter and food.



Queues for fuel, and overcrowded buses - passengers are allowed back on the roof (and other areas!) of buses during this time

Rotary and Paul Harris Fellow

On a lighter note, SM presented a Paul Harris Fellowship to Bishnu Shrestha, on behalf of the Rotary Club of Gosford North. This is in recognition of the efforts by Bishnu since 1995 in the delivery of dental care and services to the poor in Nepal, and his commitment to improving their living and social standards. Well done Bishnu!

MOC (a Rotarian) and SM attended 2 Rotary meetings while in Nepal - Rotary Club of Dhulikhel and Rotary Club of Banepa Kavre, both of which were very welcoming and presented us with club banners.



SM and Bishnu and PHF.



Mike and the Rotary Club of Dhulikhel

Acknowledgments

Once again this project was made possible due to the support of individuals and companies.

The International College of Dentists provided the funds for the dental camps and the toothbrushing programs.

The following individuals, groups and companies are greatly thanked for their support in providing equipment, materials and supplies. In alphabetical order by first name is easier:

Critical Dental
GC Australia
Henry Schein Halas
Henry Tramer
Henry Wong
Karuna Khatri
Keith Mentiplay
Malcolm Deall
Michael Eather
Rotary Club of Dee Why Warringah
Rotary Club of Gosford North
W&H

More information is available on <http://www.teethandtoilets.com.au>

Many thanks to all, I hope I haven't forgotten anyone.

Namaste!! Laso!!

Sandra Meihubers
27 October 2015