

Dear Family & Friends,

Nepal, 6 – 12 October, 2015

Thanks to your generosity & kindness I was able to raise NPR 965,696, the equivalent of US \$ 9024. It brought comfort to a few of the many, whose lives were devastated by the recent Earthquake in Nepal, which killed more than 9000 people.



My objective was to help where little help was available and to assist those most vulnerable, in areas difficult to reach. I wanted to avoid getting snared into Government bureaucracy, taxes, restrictions on movement etc. Along with my colleague from the Sewing Group Ms Manju Rana, we concluded the best way forward was for me to hand- carry the money to Kathmandu when the area to be funded and the recipients had been identified.



As the International Women's Sewing Group works in and around areas of Kathmandu, Manju contacted Mr Shiva Shresta a well-respected social activist who

works further afield, and briefed him on our criteria for disbursement of the funds. It was through his intervention that we were able to procure fuel where none was available, and make the 9 hour drive to reach the villages of Thosey and Dorje in Ramechaap District, one of the worst Earthquake affected areas.



The Tata Sumo Jeep carried seven of us in it; Ms Manju Rana, Ms Shashi Shreshta and Ms Sarojini Chitrakar from the Sewing Group, Mr Shiva Shresta, and Robert our designated photographer. Ganesh our skilled driver, drove us safely on broken

mountain roads and across raging streams, dodging landslides, his wife along for the ride, and myself.



Over 60 percent of **Thosey Village** has been destroyed, the marketplace devastated. Boulders and debris block streets that once connected one village to the next. Getting heavy equipment into these areas is expensive and

difficult if not impossible, so people continue to live in temporary shelters, some still under tarpaulins.

At the Shardha Higher Secondary School in Thosey, the only one of its kind in the entire district, 9 buildings were demolished and of the 60 rooms, only 6 are left standing. The school had a library with one million books, now all destroyed. The teachers' homes were devastated so they have been re-housed in tin sheds on campus. One temporary shelter with three classrooms and several tents now house the 660 students (369 girls and 301 boys).



Mercifully the earthquake struck on a Saturday when there were no children around. Only one student, Nimchheki Sherpa died that day while on a sight-seeing trip in Kathmandu. She was killed along with another 180 people on the Dharhara Tower, built in 1832, now just a pile of rubble. In her honour the students of class X have set up a trust in her name. They are collecting money which goes into a local cooperative bank paying an 11% interest. Their goal is to raise a corpus of NPR 100,000. With the interest accrued each year, they plan to fund 11 'untouchable' children

who cannot afford the NPR1000 annual school fee. So far, the Nimchheki Sherpa Fund has collected just under NPR 37,000.

As all the groundwork for distribution of the funds had been done by Mr Shresta prior to our arrival in the village and as the VDC (Village Development Committee) was expecting us, things moved along quickly and smoothly. The VDC comprises several Wards and each Ward has an elected Chief. Along with these officials and other community leaders, we decided how the funds would be distributed. We also decided to keep NPR 155,696 aside with the Sewing Group in case of a shortfall.



We paid for the building of 4 homes belonging to Chura Kumari Karki, Lekhi Sherpa, Kandu Sherpa and Tika Maya Magar, women who lost their husbands in the quake and have families and with young/disabled children. The two-roomed homes will be built of locally available wood with galvanised roofing. NPR 150,000 was given for each home.



Chura Kumari Karki's house, Dorje Ward



The collapsed wall which killed her husband



Lekhi Sherpa, Chorpattal Ward



Kandu Sherpa, Bigu (Ward) 9



Tika Maya Magar never owned a home and lived along with her daughter and three grandchildren on the charity of neighbours. Since the earthquake struck and the neighbour's home was destroyed, she has been living with her family under a tarpaulin. In addition to building her a house, we will also buy her a small plot of land, and give her 4 goats. When asked if she would be able to look after the goats she replied "if you give me a tiger I'll take care of him too"! Her indomitable spirit took my breath away!

The money was handed over to the women in the presence of the village community leaders and the Ward Chief who is personally responsible for helping with banking the money, building the homes and sourcing the materials and labour. Mr Shiva Shresta and ladies from the Sewing group will monitor their progress.



Shardha Higher Secondary School, Thosey

We donated money to the Shardha Higher Secondary School to build a temporary shelter to house three classrooms (NPR 150,000) and we also donated NPR 10,000 to the Nimchheki Sherpa Fund.



Sudal Village, Bhaktapur

We contributed NPR 50,000 towards finishing the construction of a community hall-cum-shelter and library in the village of Sudal, Bhaktapur near Kathmandu. The community here is disadvantaged as they are from the “untouchable” group which now has equal rights under the new constitution.



True to my promise, not a single rupee has been spent on transport or any other administrative costs.

There is a Nigerian saying “It is the heart that does the giving; the fingers only let go.”

Thank you dear ones for your big hearts





Thosey Village after the earthquake

Postscript

Some of the difficulties we encountered

Arranging for someone to live in our home and take care of my elderly bed-ridden parents while we were away – My cousin Lale happened to be visiting Singapore from Bombay and she readily agreed to do the job!

The Nepal government had ordered all incoming funds for earthquake relief be deposited into a designated account, so hand carrying US \$ 9024 in cash through Malaysian and Nepali customs and Immigration was risky.

Changing the funds at the best possible rate in the open market in Thamel without drawing too much attention to ourselves!

At the time we needed to travel, India had closed its border with Nepal , blocking all fuel imports into the country. It was with the greatest difficulty that we managed to procure enough diesel for the trip there and back. Hanging on to the “Liquid gold” (fuel) - we had to guard it with our lives! At one point on the journey we were stopped by a gang of youths brandishing guns and *khukris*. They saw the jerry cans tied to the roof of the car and wanted it! Our driver, well-versed in handling situations like this, smiled and cajoled them into believing that the jerry cans were filled with water for his lilly livered foreign passengers!

At one point as hour away from the village we came to a complete halt behind a long line of vehicles. A heavy load of steel beams had slipped off a truck ahead. We were finally able to continue the journey after a diversion was dug out, and this took about six hours!



Living in the village in a partially damaged guest house where the cold wind blew in from the gaping hole in the main wall and experiencing firsthand the great suffering and devastation brought about on these kind-hearted, simple and resilient folk whose lives are so difficult to begin with.