

Pattale Community Health Centre

Newsletter

www.pattalecommunityhealth.org

April 2017

Welcome to the annual newsletter of the Pattale Health Trust. We look forward to sharing news from Nepal and the progress of our health centre in Pattale over the past year.

This newsletter is our main point of contact with donors and friends interested in the Pattale health project and life in general in Nepal. The following is a summary of what's been happening over the past twelve months while also touching on future plans. We wish to share something of our love for these admirable people and this wonderful country. We hope you enjoy the stories and photographs.

Overview 2016

In the previous 12 months, the Nepalese people have continued rebuilding their lives after the earthquake of April 2015. This is a long and difficult process with many still unable to resume anything like their previous lives. Here is a link to a story from the New York Times that is a sad tale of corruption and incompetence.

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/11/world/asia/nepal-removes-leader-of-post-earthquake-rebuilding-effort.html?_r=0

However with energy and resilience much has been done, at least on an individual level. Our friend and project liaison, trekking guide Dorje, has been assisting and supporting the villages on his trekking routes and elsewhere, many of which are well known to him. A number of committed small projects and NGOs continue to work tirelessly to make a difference. It lifts the spirits of the Nepalese people to feel that they are not forgotten and that they are supported by others outside their beautiful if troubled country.

Many buildings have been restored and trekking and tourism is playing a central role again in bringing families income and helping them rebuild. An important spiritual site, the beautiful Boudhanath stupa in Kathmandu was finally repaired in November last year.

The Village

East of Kathmandu, Pattale is in a remote area of Nepal in the lower levels of the Everest region, the Solu Khumbu. The population is approximately 300 people who live generally a subsistence lifestyle. Transport into the area used to be several days trek from the nearest transport drop off point. A proper road has been pushed through in recent years although still quite precipitous, taking up to 10 hours by jeep from Kathmandu. Air transport into the area is available to Phaphlu, an hour or so away by jeep, but flights are unreliable due to weather conditions or closure of runways.

The Project

During a trek to Nepal in 2005, Peter and Felicity Spear along with Margaret and Michael Evans, met guide Navaraj Tamang, known as Dorje. During this trek and his subsequent sponsored visits to Australia, Dorje expressed the wish to establish a health centre in his village of Pattale. His wife nearly died delivering their first son, having to be transported hours over rough terrain to reach help. After many meetings with Dorje and people within the village to form a Committee of Management, and the formation of a Trust in Australia, the Pattale Community Health Centre was opened in March 2012.

Donating

We hope this newsletter will encourage you to give a donation to the Pattale Health Centre. If you would like to contribute to this grass roots organisation, you will find the details on page 7 near the end of the newsletter. Big or small, all donations go direct to the centre. A little goes a very long way in Nepal. Don't underestimate what a difference your contribution can make

Its restoration, supported by private donations and local volunteer help, has provided an important symbol of recovery.

The Health Centre Review

Dorje is continuing his invaluable work for the Centre, liaising between the Village Committee and the Trust in Australia. He pays the rent and salaries from the funds collected by the trust in Australia, discusses new initiatives and ideas with Committee and generally is a tower of strength in supporting the project.



Our Female Health Worker (FHW), Chet Kumari, who worked for us for over two years, moved on from the Centre in July 2016. We wish her all the best for the future.

The Committee and Dorje were quick to employ a replacement for her, as this role is much valued in the community. They found several applicants, liaised with us as to the level of salary we could support, and found an applicant with a suitable range of experience to replace Chet. Sarita trained for two years in Kathmandu and later at the Mission Hospital, Okhaldhunga (the next 'big' town), where she also later worked for 6 months. She is a local woman who comes from a small roadside settlement, Belli Danda, between Pattale and Phaphlu.

The Centre continues to be popular and is increasingly in demand as time goes by and its reach extends into the region. Coupled with this we are exploring with our Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) Binod the possibilities for further training to expand his skills and add to the services available to local people.

Another initiative which we are considering is to establish a partnership with the international group Days for Girls (www.daysforgirls.org). Motivated by the number of days lost from school by girls during their monthly cycle in countries like Nepal, this organization is committed to supporting a girl throughout her entire lifecycle, from providing her with a DfG Kit, to teaching her health education, to offering training for her when she grows older, so that she can produce DfG Kits and support hygiene needs in her community. Included in its plan is an Enterprise Model which provides women with the tools to make DfG Kits, which they can then sell, keeping the funds and reinvesting part of their income to buy their next batch of materials, thus reaching more women and girls. Another NGO called Bright Futures in Kathmandu has been trialing this project successfully. We will be discussing this idea with our new health worker. Dorje, along with Felicity and Peter Spear, made contact with the organizers in Kathmandu in April 2016 and Dorje now continues to be in touch.



Felicity and Peter with Dorje and his family, wife Laki and sons Sonam and Lakpah.

Keeping in Touch – Nepal Visits 2016

In April 2016 Peter and Felicity Spear visited Nepal, specifically to visit the centre and trek in the local area. They travelled with friends Al and Judy Miles from Jan Juc, and Teresa Williams who has a small trekking business

and is planning a new trek round the Solu Khumbu region. Michael Evans, a Trust Ambassador and regular visitor to Nepal, also visited the remote Dolpo area of Nepal. You can find his account at the end of this newsletter if you'd like some extra reading.

Pattale/Solu Khumbu Trek April 2016 - Felicity Spear

We trekked in Nepal in 2005 and 2008 on both occasions meeting Dorje. After our 2008 trek we sponsored Dorje to come and stay with us in Australia for a couple of months to improve his English while the trekking season was in recess. Consequently our Solu Khumbu trek in April 2016 was a much-anticipated moment, because for us it was specifically to visit Pattale and the centre for the first time since its establishment in 2012.

On this trip we accompanied Dorje and Teresa Williams with the intention of exploring possible lodges and new routes for Teresa and Dorje's trekking businesses. Somewhat of a wander and mystery tour over 18 days, we were able to visit some beautiful places not often seen by foreigners, including several very old monasteries and many traditional villages and farms in the full bloom of spring with a backdrop of sparkling mountains and high peaks. For a full trek report see www.slowtrekking.com



Peter, Teresa, Judy, Al and Felicity

Visit to Pattale and the Health Centre

Tuesday 12 April

At 10.30 the four of us, Peter and I as representatives of the Pattale Health Trust, and Judy and Al as supportive friends, our friend, trekking guide and assistant Dorje, and our porters, headed up the path to the Health Centre. Our introduction to the effectiveness of the Centre was immediately demonstrated as we encountered on the way Binod, the Community Medical Assistant, and Chet the Female Health Worker, (whose salaries our Pattale Health Trust provide for), attending to a sick woman in a private home. It was serious and she was put on a drip and helicoptered out to hospital.

Together we made our way to the Centre, which is the upper level of a light and roomy rented building with an office, a waiting room and two consulting rooms, which the Pattale Health Trust supports. Here we were shown around by the Village Committee, about 8 individuals,



Meeting with the Committee inside the Centre

all impressive people who manage the funding and operations of the Centre. There was also a gathering of interested villagers observing. This gathering was an opportunity to introduce ourselves, meet the Village Committee, (all men of course but I suspect women have a say behind the scenes), as well as other villagers. We presented the ongoing funding for the next 6 months as well as some medical supplies which we had brought from Australia, (supplied by the CFA), which were much appreciated, and it was an opportunity to discuss what was needed for the future so we could determine what might be possible.

Dorje was our very able translator and he welcomed us on behalf of the Committee and explained to those gathered how we had met and how the Centre had evolved through our contact with him and the others involved with the PHT. Binod then showed us the record keeping of all the patients who had come through the Centre and their ailments. This demonstrated the real need for such a service. The numbers have gradually been building and service not only the Pattale village but also many from outlying areas who often come in on market day. For January, February and March 2016 there had already been 564 patients.

Peter made a small speech saying how pleased we were that the service was helping the village and the region, and that we wished to reinforce the idea that this was a combined effort by the Trust and the Village Committee. We felt it was important that they had ownership of the service. Finally he said how happy we were to be there and meeting them all. The villagers expressed their appreciation for our assistance and presented us all with many scarves or kata which they draped over our shoulders in the traditional way to thank us. We were very touched by this and happy to have had the opportunity for this meeting. Many photos were taken! We were also impressed with the CMA Binod, the work he was doing and the way he approached his role. Since our visit Chet has retired and we now have a new Female Health Worker, a valued assistant for Binod.

We were also very touched by, and appreciative of the wonderful hospitality Dorje's family, the 'gentleman' porters and the villagers extended to us all including Teresa Williams whom we had teamed up with to establish a new trek in the Solukhumbu for her trekking business. We thought Pattale was an impressive working village in a beautiful setting, and now there is a good road through the village it has made life a little easier.



A Village Celebration

*Nepali New Year's Day 2073 /
Wednesday 13 April 2016*

A beautiful sunny day and windy as usual as the local politician arrived with a small entourage to attend the celebrations. We made our way along a mountain path through the pines, cedars, silver oaks, rhododendrons, daphne and some potato crops with Dorje and our porters. There were many happy villagers heading for a special place where a new gompa has been erected. We picnicked on the grass looking down the valley to distant villages and layers of mountains. There was much music, dancing and food and drink stalls and the revellers, from babies to the elderly seemed to be having such fun. There was also the local sardhu (holy man), giving



blessings and pressing tikkas on to foreheads including ours. We were privileged and delighted to be part of it and will always remember the colour and spontaneous happiness of this day.

Village Profiles

We thought you might like to meet some of the locals who make up the committee that helped develop and still guide the centre in the village. They have increasingly taken responsibility for the hands on running of it as needed, actively seeking the initial government registration and then employing a female staff member when the need was expressed by the local women. There are several different committees where villagers meet and discuss issues as necessary. They organize work projects or pay contributions for joint projects like the running of the local weekly market, cleaning, water and timber management of joint areas.

Every five years the committee is open for election. In June last year, the founding president Tek Bahadur Magar and secretary/vice-president Ram Bahadur Magar the headmaster of the local school both retired. We thank them for their valuable and hard work in forming the committee and establishing the centre.



The Health Committee 2016

Pattale Health Centre Committee (elected 2016)

President	Raj Kumar Magar
Finance	Lek Bahadur Tarpar Magar – Dorje’s next-door neighbour and long-term friend from high school, building contractor, His first wife and mother of the five children died in early 2013. He has remarried. His handsome oldest son Subas often has trekked with us.
Secretary/VP	Prakas Thapa Magar
Members	Navaraj Tamang / Dorje Neewa Dowwa Tamang– father of Dorje Kamal – businessman, owns small goods store
Senior Advisor	Tek Bahadur Magar - ex Indian Army Gurkha and founding president of the Health Committee

You see some names recurring, as many like Gurung, Tamang or Magar are caste names. For example Magars are of Mongolian descent via Tibet but now a Hindu caste.

All members of the Trust have now been able to visit the village and centre and every time we are overwhelmed with hospitality and kindness. Walking the streets you are always meeting someone who you have met before, or is related to someone. Even if they have little or no English everyone is on for a chat.

Nepal Contacts

Nepal is not just about getting to the highest peaks. You can trek or you can just visit. Both bring great rewards. If you are thinking of visiting Nepal we can heartily recommend the following guides:

Dorje (Navaraj Tamang) himself is an excellent contact with years of experience in guiding and arranging treks.

He is best contacted on Facebook (Nawa Tamang) or by email (chyang_3@hotmail.com).

These are all his names! Nepalese often go by short, family or nick names. These are all our Dorje!

Teresa Williams of SlowTrekking offers both full trekking and a cultural tour, which is a great introduction to the country. The website is a mine of information about conditions, what to wear and what to expect. This is an ethical company that respects the local culture and treats their porters and guides kindly and responsibly.

<http://www.slowtrekking.com/>



The Final Word

Thank you for taking the time to read about the project. We hope you enjoyed learning more about Nepal and Pattale and the valuable work being done to assist Pattale village and the region through your interest and donations.

Please consider continuing to support us and spread the word. A little goes a long way in Nepal and your money goes directly to the project. Feel free to forward this newsletter to others who may be interested.

There are a number of large aid organizations in Nepal as you might expect, but there are also many smaller worthwhile projects which are making a direct difference to people's lives. If managed well and inclusively with the local community these smaller NGOs can also make a real impact and remain sustainable. Small can be beautiful! We believe that the Pattale Community Health project is one of these.



All the Trustees are available and willing to speak to community groups about the Pattale Community Health Centre and Nepal. We are passionate about Nepal and our project and the Nepali people.

We welcome your enquiries.

Thank you for your interest and we hope you will consider continuing to support our project.

Namaste.

Pattale Health Trust

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Fundraising

Donations from Australia pay for salary of staff, rent, electricity, phone and support the purchase of medical supplies. If there is available funding, equipment, training and the expansion of facilities are considered.

We do not have tax deductibility. We deal with relatively small amounts of money and the process of registration for the tax deductions is not feasible at this stage. Except for a few small expenses, for example the web site or freight for donated supplies, donations go directly to the project.

Remember a little goes a long way in Nepal. Our contributions have made a significant impact already in this small village, bringing reliable and cost effective basic medical support.

Donations

electronic transfer or deposit in person at any branch of Bendigo Bank

BANK Bendigo Bank

BSB 633 000

ACCOUNT 151099801

ACCOUNT NAME

F M Spear, M A G Evans & D R Rawling ATF The Pattale Health Trust

please email Margaret Evans (margaretevans@westnet.com.au) when you deposit or transfer so she can track the finances! Thanks.

cheques or money orders can be sent to:

Mrs. Margaret Evans

Honorary Secretary

Pattale Health Trust

40 Manifold Street

Colac 3250 VIC

The people of Pattale thank you.

Extra Reading

Michael Evans has visited Nepal and Pattale a number of times and is the Pattale Health Trust Ambassador. After reading and being inspired by Peter Matthiessen's celebrated book *The Snow Leopard*, he visited Nepal once more in 2016 to fulfil a dream of trekking in the Dolpo area of Nepal. His report follows.

An Adventure in Dolpo – Nepal

May 2016

With bags packed, imaginations running riot with the mysteries of Dolpo and 12 months planning under our belt, Jack, Shelly, Cathy and I sallied forth to Nepal in early May 2016. Our guide Mangal Thakali and his assistants Nawa Sherpa and Lahar met us and settled us in to the Tibetan Guesthouse in Thamal, Kathmandu.

From there we flew into dusty Juphal after a delay in Kathmandu. Our gang met “the crew” of 12 porters, cooks and support staff that included a familiar face from other treks, Bir, who was the cook. We also met another group of Aussies who were doing the same circuit as us. Lake Phoksundo beckoned so we packed out traps and headed into the wilds of Lower Dolpo. A couple of days recovery at Ringmogaon and we were off toward the mighty Kang La, (a high pass). The scenery was absolutely stunning and Phoksundo glistened below us. Hard to imagine it has never had a boat on it.

On Kang La, the gateway to Upper Dolpo and the mysterious Shey and Saldang, illness and weather delayed our crossing. This was done in a pea soup fog after leaving the other Aussies at high camp after they decided to turn back to Dunai due to illness. The climb was tough the weather was cold but the reward was worth it all as we descended into the mystical world of the Bonpo people. We were also on the lookout for the rare snow leopard and talked to many locals who had had encounters with them, including one man who showed us the bite marks on his wrist incurred while wrestling a male leopard while protecting his sheep.



Michael with Shelley, Cathy and Jack on Dolpo trek

We were on the path of Matthiessen to Shey Gompa (a shrine, temple or monastery). The guides and locals kept telling us the scenery would get even better, hard to believe but true. A rest day at the famous landmark saw us stalking a big mob of blue sheep and visiting the Red Gompa, a remote monastery set in an indescribable setting of red coloured gorges and craggy cliff faces.

Saldang, the capital of Upper Dolpa was next stop where we stayed in the compound of the renowned Armchi of Saldang, Lamdang Tudup that was an amazing experience. I had read about him in the book *Caravans of the Himalaya* by Eric Valli and Dianne Summers who also went on to make the film *Himalaya*. Also visiting was the Rinpoche who was head of one of the four sects of Buddhism. We were invited to participate in the welcoming Puja (prayer meeting), and soon realised we had been trekking with this prestigious man for a number of

days without knowing it. He was a very humble person and gave us all his blessing for a safe journey. Cathy needed it as she was continually suffering from symptoms of altitude sickness and she had to resort to a pony for the rest of her trip.

Celebrations complete we headed to the famed valley of Thakohiu Khola and the trading town of Do Tarap. This involved crossing a number of 5,000+mt. passes which stretched the lungs and the body. We met wandering shepherds and goat herders, pony, yak and human porter caravans trading goods all over Dolpa, but still no elusive snow leopard despite seeing many “signs” along the way. At Do Tarap I celebrated my 64th birthday with a party that grew to almost include the whole town population plus many of the Yasa –Kumbu harvesters who were gathering there for the upcoming harvest. The Chang and Raksi flowed, the dancing was vigorous and the singing was outrageous.

The high passes to Charka Bot and our final destination Jomson beckoned so once again we were off with Cathy mounted on a new trusty steed. The elusive Dhaulagiri mountain greeted us as we ascended the Niwa pass and then onto the gut busting Tuchela Baanjyang at 5,563m. This was our first sight of the mighty Kali Gandaki valley and the entrance to the enchanting Upper Mustang that I had visited a few years before. Santa village saw our last look at the remote pathways to Dolpo and the unique lifestyle of the Bonpo.



Upper Dolpo - you just have to keep going with aching back, tummy troubles, feet blisters or altitude sickness. The group experienced them all!

Shortly after leaving we heard the mechanical roar of an excavator building a new road from Kagbeni into Dolpo that saddened us all, but that is progress. The usual Mustang wind greeted us on the walk down the valley from Kagbeni to Jomson and ‘civilisation’. Feet were



Trekking over five passes over 5000m is tiring!

sore and bones were tired and we couldn't get a jeep because there was a 'strike' on, so 'shank's pony' all the way including Cathy who was appreciating the lower altitude. All in all it was the most amazing 27 day trek through one of the most remote places on earth, helped along by incredible friendly guides and porters ably led by our guide Mangal Thakali, who we recommend highly (thakalimb2003@yahoo.com).
Michael Evans