

Pattale Community Health Centre

Newsletter

www.pattalecommunityhealth.org

March 2015



Welcome to the annual newsletter of the Pattale Health Trust.

What a great year. Much has been achieved in the village. The health centre is well and truly up and running. It is being well supported not just by the nearby community but receiving visits from other areas as it is acquiring a reputation for being reliably staffed and supplied. The village health committee continues to show enthusiasm and enterprise in day to day running and planning for the future.

The newsletter summarises the activities and achievements during the past 12 months.

It also serves as our main point of contact with potential and past donors.

Donating

If you feel you would like to contribute to this grass roots project please see the details on the final page.

The support of our generous donors ensures that the centre continues to play an important role in this isolated community.



The village

East of Kathmandu, Pattale is in a remote area of Nepal. 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 road of sorts has been pushed through in recent years so now it is merely treacherous, taking up to 18 hours by jeep from Kathmandu. Air transport into the area is tenuous at the best, if available at all, 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.

Achievements 2014/15

1. Registration achieved.

The Village Health Committee has finally secured PAN (Permanent Account Number) registration. This is linked to the Department of Inland Revenue and is a government document that allows you to officially engage in a specified activity. There are categories for pharmacy shops and hospitals for instance, among many others. The registration was a long process partly because of distance to travel to the nearest administrative centre and partly because of the bureaucracy involved. The Committee persisted with the drawn out process despite the difficulties of distance and their work obligations. The villagers were very proud to achieve this new status. It is a step to official recognition and enabling the PHC/village to access government services and health initiatives

2. The Centre's first female health assistant was appointed. Chet Kumari joined the centre from April 2014.

3. A voluntary levy on villagers of NRP100 (\$1.29) has been used to upgrade and add to the furniture in the centre.

4. Two deliveries of donated medical supplies have significantly supplemented local purchases.



New Appointee

At the meeting in August 2014, Michael Evans was appointed Trust Ambassador. Michael has been involved in the project from the first discussions on trek in Nepal in 2005, and visited again in October 2013 taking supplies and funding. He has attended most meetings, maintaining a close and constructive interest. He welcomes the opportunity the Centre offers to give back something to the people and country he has become passionate about.



Future Plans

It has always been an aim of the Trust, the Village Health Committee and the local community to buy land and build a purpose-built health centre. As new roads open the area to new opportunities in tourism and trade, land prices are beginning to go up. The Committee and the Trust are exploring the possibility of land purchase at least, to secure a suitable site for a future building.

ADSL will become available in 4 – 6 months. This will offer opportunities from Internet connection at the Centre. We will look at the options this may

offer for more direct communication with Binod and the Committee. Both he and Ram (secretary of Committee and head teacher at the school) can read and write English.

A new hand basin and mirror are to be installed.

A nebulizer and oroscope for nose, throat and ear inspection are to be purchased

Keeping in Contact

Trust members have managed two visits to Nepal in the last 12 months, keeping up the contact and delivering supplies and funding



Peter, Neewa, Pasang, Margaret, Choky and Diane

April 2014

Margaret Evans with her son Peter and friend Diane O'Brien combined trekking with a visit to the village. Following their 11-hour jeep trip from Kathmandu, they can report that the road is not improving. Dorje's parents, Neewa and Choky, again provided their well-known hospitality in their comfortable traditional home. All cooking is done on a tidy and well-appointed open hearth.



The group had some time to walk about the village and surroundings

enjoying the rhododendrons and daphne in bloom, not to mention the spectacular views of the Himalayas including Sagarmatha (Everest) that are a highlight of this area.

A meeting with the Village Health Committee had been set up in advance. A visit is always much appreciated and there is a lot of excitement in the community. The Health Centre building was decorated for their arrival there and many villagers were in attendance with children, garlands and kata scarves. Margaret said it was overwhelming and emotional to see such appreciation and excitement. Committee members and the medical assistant, Binod were there for the meeting.

Many village members also sit in on these meetings. The proceedings are closely followed with great interest.



There is only a little English spoken. Translation was provided this time by Dorje's young nephew Pasang who was the guide for this trip. He admitted to being nervous but did a great job.

Margaret spoke to the group and handed round the latest newsletter from the Trust. She congratulated the committee on the recent registration of the Centre. The registration certificates were proudly brought out and admired

During the two and half hour meeting:

- Margaret handed over the 50kgs of donated medical supplies that the group had brought from Australia. These came from local donations mostly the CFA (Country Fire Authority).



- Half yearly payments from the Trust were delivered. These primarily cover salary, rent and electricity.

- An increase in salary for the CMA was discussed. Based on this discussion, taking into account his length of service to the centre (now over 2 years), the committee has since increased Binod's salary.

- The possibility of employing a female medical assistant was addressed. This request had arisen previously. A suitable person was living in a nearby village and interested in this role. After the meeting, she was contacted and accepted straightaway.

- The finance records were presented and discussed,

- Requests and suggestions were presented.

- Diane presented a case of clothes that she had brought with her for the village. These included hats, scarves and hand knitted jumpers for children. These were received with delight and taken charge of by the Women's Committee for distribution. The Health Centre Committee is all male but there is an active and vocal Women's

Committee in the village who have a lot of input into issues in the area.



The Australian visitors felt that the meeting was very productive. There was much enthusiasm and a free exchange of ideas and information. Following the meeting, new signage was hung, flanked by the Nepalese and Australian flags. Tea and biscuits were served and there was much animated conversation.



Following their visit to Pattale, the intrepid group headed off to Phaplu by jeep to begin their trek across to Shivalaya guided by young Pasang with Lakpa and Gelj.



October 2014

Trust member Ian Stanley Eyles also had an opportunity to visit Nepal last year. Unfortunately not able to get up to Pattale itself, he did manage to spend time with Dorje in Kathmandu either side of treks both were doing. He was able to deliver 37kgs of donated medical supplies though not without some difficulties. A long and convoluted process with Nepalese customs developed including a ride through the streets on the back of a customs man's motorbike. Riding with Dorje is hair raising enough, (the traffic not Dorje's driving), but with someone you don't know it takes the experience to a whole other level.

In Ian's own words,
'More argy-bargy over the boxes and carry on about retrieving them because they had been left so long and were now buried somewhere at the back of the warehouse. We traipsed in and out offices collecting an ever-lengthening string of people as they argued about what the contents were to be classified as on the computer....' and so it went on. Over four hours later Ian finally had all his boxes and a much greater appreciation of the processes of Nepalese bureaucracy. By going ourselves when we can, we gain a bit of understanding about how it is to operate in this world for our friends who live here. As well as delving into Nepalese bureaucracy, Ian had discussions with

Dorje about issues around the project including staffing. Chet Kumari, the new female assistant is settling in well. He handed over the next 6 months' funding which takes them through to April 2015. Payments can be sent electronically but if someone is visiting it is often convenient to send the donations by hand.



Ian and Dorje triumphant with the medical supplies finally released from customs.

The personal contact offered by these so far regular visits by Trust members is invaluable. They help establish trust, show continued interest and personalize our contribution. It is not sure how long we can personally go on visiting but so far it has worked out well. Between us there is a good chance we can keep up a fairly consistent contact. We all have varied contact regularly with Dorje himself.

If anyone else has an interest and is visiting Nepal, please feel free to contact us and we can put you in touch with Dorje. A visit to Pattale would benefit the Trust, the villagers and the lucky visitor.

Staff Profiles

Binod Magar is employed as the CMA (Community Medical Assistant). He is a local boy now just 23 years old. He has now worked at the centre for nearly 3 years.



Margaret and Binod in the dispensary

Navaraj Tamang (Dorje) as always deserves our heartfelt thanks for his efforts. His ongoing enthusiasm and energy for all the details of keeping the project running smoothly are invaluable.



The surfing sherpa - Dorje in Victoria

Thank You

Colin Jones of Geelong First Aid is collecting recently expired first aid supplies. These are carefully screened for suitability. Bandages and Saline for instance are still useful after expiry dates. This is unsolicited and just because he likes the project.



Jetta Express of Tullamarine gave discounted freight price and was very helpful when they discovered that the freight was donated items.



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.

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/>

Dorje himself is an excellent contact with years of experience in guiding and arranging treks.
<http://www.nepalonfoot.com/>

The Final Word

Thank you for taking the time to read about the project. We hope you enjoyed finding out a little about the people and the work. Please consider supporting us if you can. A little goes a long way in Nepal

and the money goes direct to the project. Feel free to forward this newsletter to others who may be interested in this kind of project. All the large aid organizations are in Nepal of course but there are also many small worthwhile projects which are making a direct difference to people's lives. Small can be beautiful and sustainable and make an impact.

All of us are available and interested to talk to community groups about the Pattale Community Health Centre. We are passionate about this area and the people.
We welcome your enquiries.

Thank you for your interest and we look forward to hearing from you.

Namaste.

Pattale Health Trust

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Donations

Donations from Australia primarily 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

can be made at any branch of Bendigo Bank or by **electronic transfer**.

BANK Bendigo Bank
BSB 633 000
ACCOUNT 151099801
ACCOUNT NAME

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

*please email Margaret Evans 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
50 Grimshaw's Road
Banongarook West Victoria 3249

The people of Pattale thank you.