

An Overview of the

Nepal Schools Project Gorkha District, Nepal

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Prepared by

Richard Jackson

02 9466 8270

rjackson@jacksonassociates.com.au

Level 7, 68 Alfred Street, Milsons Point NSW 2061

P.O. Box 426 Milsons Point NSW 1565

Background

In April 2006 Allan Waldon, a butcher from Sydney, trekked to Everest Base Camp. His guide was a young man from Gorkha, Prem Khatri. On his return to Australia Allan started working with Prem to help rebuild Prem's local school, Bhairabi Primary School, in Gorkha District.



Richard Jackson joined the team in August 2007. The relationship with Rotary commenced in early 2008. Allan and Richard travelled to Nepal in January 2009 on a planning mission. RAWCS approval was obtained in March 2009.

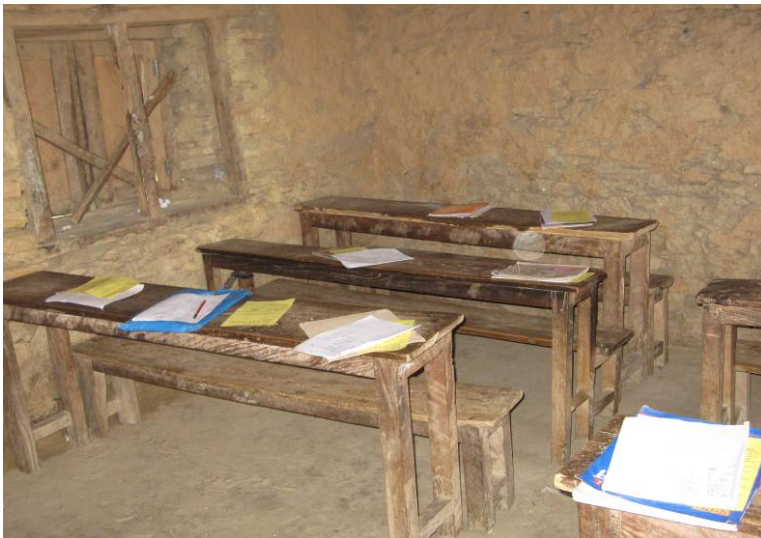
The success of the project led to expansion across a broad range of activities in approximately 15 Government schools neighbouring Bhairabi in eastern Gorkha District covering:

- Classroom Improvements
- Teacher Training
- Toilet Block Construction
- Volunteer Teams

The local village communities in this remote corner of the Himalayan foothills are very poor subsistence farmers and while they understand that education is the key to a better life for their families, given their often desperate circumstances they have no capacity to add to the very limited resources provided by the Government or provide anything other than a sometimes distressingly poor learning environment. Our classroom improvement activities help create healthier, brighter, cleaner and better ventilated classrooms.

Building work is done by locals using locally available materials and technologies to facilitate ongoing maintenance.

In Nepal the project has been organised through the creation of an NGO, the Sambhav Nepal Foundation <http://www.sambhavnepal.org> which is registered with the Nepal Government's Social Welfare Council.





The schools are in the Gorkha district in the centre of Nepal to the west of Kathmandu. The major Himalayan peaks 'Ganesh Himal' and 'Manaslu' which reaches over 8,000 metres are visible from the villages.

Travel to the villages requires a six hour journey by four wheel drive followed by a one hour walk climbing over 800 meters to the villages. In the hills the 'roads' are rarely-used very poor tracks. Day to day transport is walking in steep terrain.

The Gorkha District is the heart of the traditional recruiting area for the British Army's Brigade of Gurkhas and many retired Gurkhas live in the area.

The standard of living is very basic. Nearly all of the people are subsistence farmers raising rice in terraced paddies, with only one in ten earning their living from work in the cash economy. It is commonplace for people to have only one set of clothes and to live in one room.



The villagers are Hindu, although a Shaman remains active in the area.

Approximately 53% of the students at Dharapani are girls. Just over 60% are either Dalit (formerly known as 'untouchables') or Janjati (members of non-Nepali ethnic groups, the Gurung people in this case).

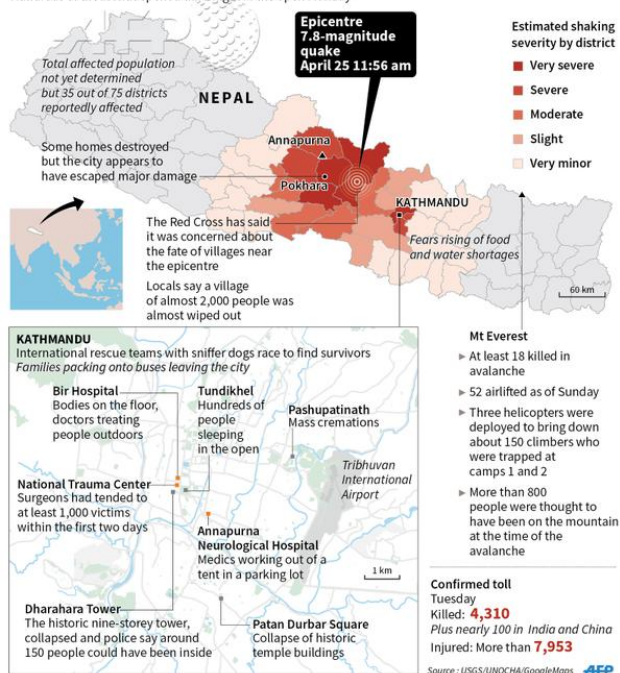
The Earthquake

On April 25th 2015 a major earthquake occurred in Nepal killing almost 9,000 people, injuring 22,000 and damaging or destroying nearly 800,000 homes. Approximately 600,000 Nepalese still live in temporary or unsafe housing.

The schools we support are in and around Arupockhai V.D.C. in Gorkha District which is very close to the epicenter of the earthquake, in the remote Hills about 60 KMs northwest of Kathmandu.

Nepal earthquake

Hundreds of thousands spent a third night in the open Monday



Arupockhai V.D.C. is located to the southeast of the epicentre just inside the border between darkest red 'very severe' region i.e. Gorkha District and the 'severe' region i.e. Dhading District.



The destruction in the area was brutal, over 90% of the houses were completely destroyed or seriously damaged.

Fortunately the earthquake occurred in the middle of the day on a Saturday, so nearly everyone was out of doors and the schools were empty.

Nonetheless over 60 people were killed in the area where the project operates.

Vital infrastructure including the drinking water reticulation system and the road network were extensively damaged. The community also lost large numbers of farm animals.



This is the main classroom block at Dharapani School, site of the Library funded by the project in 2010.



Devi Jal Kumari School in Aprik village. 4 people were killed and many were injured in Aprik. The photo shows a block of three classrooms.



Also at Devi Jal Kumari School. Another classroom block.

The Earthquake - Our Response

Emergency Relief

Our first response was to provide \$7,500 for immediate relief needs. The funds were applied to:

- 7,000 kgs of rice and lentils, as the villagers' stored food was buried under the ruins of their homes.
- Cheap sheets of corrugated roofing and tarpaulins to build emergency shelters.

The items were delivered to the villagers on May 2nd 2016, seven days after the earthquake.



Prem and his team unloading rice roadside at Ratmate, the village where the Bhairabi Primary is located. Closest to the camera is Prem's brother Raj whose house was destroyed in the earthquake.

The track is a relatively good of local 'roads' in the area.

Fund Raising

Fund raising efforts were launched immediately.

Significant donations from Rotary Clubs included:

Rotary Club of Gerrard's Cross	\$7,650
Rotary Club of Randwick	\$4,500
Rotary Club of Ballarat East	\$2,000
Rotary Club of Galston	\$1,600
Rotary Club of Canberra Sunrise	\$1,500
Rotary Club of Turramurra	\$1,000

And from students at:

UNNSW	\$5,524 (direct to Nepal)
St Augustine's College Brookvale	\$5,300 (direct to Nepal)
Birrong Girls High	\$1,380
Investing For Charity (a group of past UNSW students)	\$800
Bondi Beach Public	\$583

The local community in and around Wahroonga rallied to the cause, with hundreds of Ku-ring-gai residents donating in addition to supporting three very successful fundraising functions comprising:

- A highly successful Trivia night organized and supported by Anne Prescott and the members of the 2014 Teacher Training Team.
- A sausage sizzle at Allan Waldon's Butcher shop Easter Road Quality Meats.
- A morning tea hosted by concerned Wahroonga resident.

Prem Khattry established a trekking company in 2007 which has boomed and is now ranked no.1 for outdoor activities in Nepal on TripAdvisor. Prem's former clients have rallied to the project's aid. Rotary's on-line tax deductible donation facility for the project has been vital to our fundraising efforts, receiving donations from all states and territories in Australia and from around the world.

For several years students from UNSW have volunteered in the project's schools during Uni holidays. One past student volunteer Sonic Patel has transferred to the Australian Defence Force Academy, the ADF Officer training Uni, where he is training to be an Air Force Officer. Sonic organised a team of 6 trainee officers from all services who undertook the 'Rickshaw Run' as a fundraiser raising over \$6,500. The Rickshaw Run is a 2,000 km traverse of India from Cochin to the far northeast in a 3 wheel 7 horsepower open sided taxi. (The composition of the team, including 2 supports, says a lot about ADFA and the future of Australia – 2 have Indian family backgrounds, 1 Asian, 1 Hispanic, 1 is a woman and just 3 Anglo-Celtic males.)

Rotary Water Supply Project

The Rotary Club of Wahroonga which provided \$7,500 and the Rotary Club of Chatswood which provided \$10,000 successfully applied for District Simplified Grants of \$5,000 each, for a total of \$27,000 to fund earthquake reconstruction and aid projects in Nepal. The funds were applied to a Drinking Water Supply Project in Dharapani School & Village and Katunje, Ratamate, Khahare, Siraan and Lamagaun Villages Gorkha, Nepal.

Work on the project commenced on April 25th 2016, the first anniversary of the Earthquake, and has just been concluded.



The project was undertaken in a remote part of the Himalayan foothills where construction work is undertaken by local tradesmen using locally available labour and materials.

For example the only local source of sand to mix with cement is to hire local labourers to carry sacks of sand from the Budi Gandaki river up to the construction site.

In the absence of the genuine local knowledge and appropriate contacts that Sambhav possess, cost management would be a major problem.

Our Nepalese partner Sambhav Nepal co-ordinated the construction work under the supervision of a professional engineer.



The local community carried out much of the labouring work and was paid at the local rate for day labourers, just over A\$10 per day. This implementation model is well understood by the local communities in the Arupokhari V.D.C., having been used in the past for a number of successful school renovation and library and toilet construction projects since 2008.

Sambhav Nepal was required to obtain Nepal Government approval prior to work commencing and is required to report after project completion.

Current Schools Reconstruction Projects

The team have provided funding to two projects to rebuild, in whole or part, schools severely damaged in the earthquake. Total funding for these projects is approximately A\$75,000. Work is expected to start in September after the Monsoon ends, following signoff by the Nepali Government NGO regulator.

A block of four classrooms will be built at Dharapani Secondary School which was totally destroyed in the Earthquake. Total funding required is \$50,000 of which \$32,500 has been sourced from donations to the Project's RAWCs account, with the balance from the 'Rickshaw Run' team and donations direct to Nepal via an Indigogo a/c from former trekking clients of Prem's who did not wish to use the RAWCS on-line donation facility.

These buildings will comply with the United Nations Development Program recommendations for earthquake-resistant buildings, incorporating reinforced concrete framing.

The damage at Bhairabi Primary School was less severe, arguably due to the construction of a concrete retaining wall to support the school site by students from St Augustine's Brookvale plus the buildings are relatively new and cement rendered. The project will build two earthquake-resistant classrooms and repair 6 other damaged classrooms. The work will cost approximately \$25,000 of which \$14,300 has been sourced from donations to the Project's RAWCs account, with the balance funded by the donations from the students of St Augustine's Brookvale and UNSW.

Reconstruction Projects under Development

Gandaki School Community

The members of the January 2014 teacher training team identified Gandaki Secondary as the school they wished to support through fundraising on their return to Australia. Work on rebuilding the school was about to begin when the Earthquake destroyed it.

For many years schemes have been proposed to construct a hydroelectricity project which would flood the lower parts of the valley where our schools are located. The original scheme would not have impacted any of the schools we support, which are above the dam. However following the earthquake the Chinese Government has committed to an enlarged project which will flood the Gandaki Secondary School site.

As the future of the school is unclear, we will divert much of the funds raised to a project, above the proposed dam level, to benefit the broader community in the area around Gandaki Secondary.

Manbu Hostel Reconstruction



The project's past support for the student hostel at Bhawani Secondary School in Manbu village is discussed later in this report.

The hostel was almost completely destroyed in the Earthquake. This photo shows the school approx. two weeks after the earthquake.

The buildings on the right, between the open school yard and roofing iron on the edge of the photo, were the main school building, standing two floors above the yard.

We are currently assessing the opportunity to rebuild the hostel.

Rotary Global Grant

Some project supporters will be aware that, prior to the earthquake, the team had been working towards securing a Rotary International Global Grant to build new school toilet blocks in Gorkha. It has been decided not to proceed with this project at present. The factors in this decision were:

- The low priority given to toilets by the local people following the earthquake. The schools want classrooms first, toilets later.
- The difficulty of complying with a budget set prior to the earthquake. Since the earthquake the cost of building materials has increased significantly.
- The impact of the enlarged dam project.

Projects and Programs – Before the Earthquake

Reconstruction of Bhairabi Primary School

Bhairabi Primary School has been completely rebuilt and expanded. Prior to renovation 47 students struggled in three leaky dark dusty decaying rooms. The school now has eight vastly improved rooms, new toilets and a computer lab. The school had expended to housing over 150 students prior to the Earthquake.



This photo was taken in late June 2010. It has been included to illustrate the construction methods used in Nepal. The walls are simple stacked stone sourced locally.

Since 2010 two more rooms have been built as a second storey to the rooms with the blue doors and shutters at the right rear.

The whole complex has been cement rendered by a fantastic volunteer team from St Augustine's Brookvale.



The roofs no longer leak and the classrooms are much larger.

Larger windows have improved lighting and ventilation. Glass is not used in the Himalayan foothills as the extreme difficulty of safe transport, in a place where most goods are still physically carried, makes it too expensive.

New furniture has been provided for the school.

Since this photo was taken, the classroom floors have been concreted, so that the dirt floor shown here is now in the past.

The school now has access to mains electricity for three or four hours per day.



A new toilet block has been constructed with two toilets for girls and a western style flush toilet for foreign volunteers.

The toilets were constructed with the assistance of a small grant arranged by the Australian Embassy in Kathmandu under the Australian Government Direct Aid Program.

A computer lab has been constructed at Bhairabi Primary supported by students from the University of New South Wales.

English language classes are being progressively introduced to the school.



The ongoing support of Allan and Kate Waldon has been critical to the project's success and in particular the development of Bhairabi Primary school.

For almost a decade Allan has forgone the opportunity to sell dog bones at his butcher shop Eastern Road Quality Meats in Turrumurra, asking instead for a donation to the project.

Allan has also effectively nurtured potential major donors, including leading a trek of major donors to 14 schools in Gorkha in January 2013.

Construction of Dharapani Secondary School Library

In Dharapani Secondary School a library, the first library in the district, has been constructed.

The completed Library was opened by the Australian Ambassador to Nepal Ms Susan Grace on Thursday May 20th 2010.



Ms Susan Grace Australian Ambassador to Nepal is shown here arriving at Dharapani Lower Secondary School to open the new Library.

Dharapani Lower Secondary School has 350 students. The Library is available to assist all the nearby schools and the local community generally. The library holds 3,000 books with capacity for approximately 15,000.

Tragically the building was seriously damaged in the Earthquake and cannot be used at present.

Rotary Gorkha School Toilet Matching Grant Project

In 2013 Rotarian Peter Kindred, who had led the January 2012 teacher training team, successfully applied for a Rotary International 'Matching Grant' to fund the construction of four school toilet blocks.



The toilets are used by approximately 1,200 students and 80 teachers at Bal Udaya Primary, Gyan Bhumi Primary, Dubar Higher Secondary and Siddha Devi Higher Secondary schools.

The project was a partnership between Rotary Clubs in Sydney (Wahroonga and Chatswood) and Nepal (Mount Everest, Lalitpur), Rotary District 9685 and the Rotary International Foundation. Project funding provided the Rotary Clubs of Chatswood and Wahroonga, was 'matched' by funding from Rotary International Foundation in Chicago, USA. The Rotary Club of Mount Everest, Lalitpur managed the construction process.

Schools Renovation

At Jala Kenya Primary School, Bal Udaya Primary School and Sitala Primary School the classrooms have been renovated and additional educational resources supplied thanks to the very generous support of our Australian sponsors.

The work has focused on much needed repairs to fixtures and fittings, and to furniture. Floors and wall have been plastered and painted, and blackboards repaired or installed.

The schools have also received support for student stationery.



This photo shows the renovated classroom block at Bal Udaya Primary in Satdobata village, renovated thanks to the generosity of two Wahroonga residents.

Note the translucent panels immediately below the eaves. These panels flood the classrooms with natural light, even during the Monsoon when torrential rain forces the window shutters to be closed.

Satdobata is a magical place. It perches on a razor sharp ridge and the view from the school is majestic with panoramic views of Ganesh Himal to one side and mighty Manaslu, 8th highest mountain in the world, on the other.



This photo shows the hostel at Manbu School.

Manbu is home to a High School serving the surrounding villages including some beyond a sensible day return walk to school, so 42 kids board during the week at the hostel.

Manbu is towards the upper limit of the habitable zone in the Himalayas and is cold at night in winter, very cold for children trying to sleep during a snow storm in a room with no heating, no insulation, no ceiling, no glass in the windows and hard stone walls.

A key project supporter saw the need at Manbu and responded. Today a basic vinyl floorcovering makes the dorms both warmer under foot and easier to clean. Thanks to warm blankets and new sheets the kids are healthier and can plough their energy into learning not staying warm.

Teacher Training

Teacher training has grown to become a key focus for the project.

November 2009

A one week long residential teacher training course was undertaken in November 2009 at Dharapani. Three qualified and experienced Nepali teacher educators were brought in from Kathmandu to conduct the course. 60 teachers from 10 local schools attended the training course.

January 2011 Rotary Teacher Training Team

In January 2011 Richard Jackson instigated and led a Rotary volunteer teacher training team which travelled to Arupockhari to undertake a six day intensive teacher training course.

The team, all active members of Rotary, comprised Richard Jackson, Denise Flockton Head Teacher of Social Sciences at Wagga Wagga High School, Associate Professor Anne Prescott Head of the School of Education at the University of Technology Sydney, Associate Professor Graham Tyson Dean for Graduate Studies Faculty of Arts Charles Sturt University Bathurst, Judy Tyson La Salle Academy in Lithgow and Mary Brell a free lance learning and development consultant and trainer.



53 local Nepali teachers participated in the training program, representing 22 schools. Some of the teachers walked 3 hours each way to participate in the program.

January 2012 Rotary Teacher Training Team



In January 2012 a second Rotary teacher training team visited the schools, under the leadership of experienced Rotarian Peter Kindred who left receiving a souvenir of the trip.

Peter has since implemented a project, funded by Rotary in Australia, Nepal and the USA, to build four toilet blocks in schools near Bhairabi.

January 2014 Teacher Training Team



In January 2014 Anne Prescott returned to Nepal for her third trip, leading our 2014 teacher training team.

The 2014 team of 9 were drawn from Anne's past students at the UTS.

The team were fantastic fundraisers, raising over \$35,000.

January 2015 Teacher Training Team



In January 2015 Anne Prescott returned to Nepal for her fourth teacher training trip, together with Jan Cameron.

42 teachers received training from 24 local schools.

January 12th 2015 was the 21st anniversary of the founding of Bhairabi Primary, site of the teacher training. A grand celebration was organised, the highlight of which was the presentation of certificates of appreciation to Anne and Jan by the Hon Chitralekha Yadav, Minister for Education in Nepal.

Volunteer Partnerships

The project actively looks for opportunities to work with volunteer groups. We currently have fruitful partnerships with the University of New South Wales and St Augustine's College Brookvale.

University of New South Wales – Student Volunteers



In June 2011 a party of students from the University of NSW travelled to Nepal, staying in Arupokhari for 10 days to teach English.

As the initial exploratory trip was a successful, subsequent teams have visited five times since.

The July 2016 volunteer party, shown left, arrived in Nepal On Thursday 29 July 2016. They will help rebuild Bhairabi Primary before trekking to Poon Hill.

St Augustine's College Brookvale – Student Volunteers



In September 2012 a party of 13 year 10 boys and 4 staff from St Augustine's at Brookvale camped at Bhairibi Primary, following a recommendation by the Australian Ambassador to Nepal. The school returned in 2013 and in December 2014 35 boys worked at Bhairibi.

The teams cement rendered the school buildings and reinforced, with concrete, the retaining wall that the supports the school site. This work saved the school in the Earthquake in April 2015, as only 2 school rooms were irreparably damaged.

The materials cost is covered by funding raised by the boys, who have raised or target over \$35,000 so far.

Our Partnership with Rotary

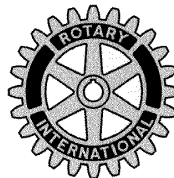
Rotary Club of Wahroonga 'adopted' the project early in 2008 with the help of Bob Howe. Richard Jackson joined the Rotary Club of Wahroonga to strengthen the relationship between Rotary and Allan Waldon's team of supporters. Allan and Richard travelled to Nepal in January 2009 on a planning mission leading to RAWCS approval of the project which was obtained in March 2009.

New Rotarians have been recruited from among the project's supporters in Australia, Canada and Nepal. Rotary volunteer teams have been sent from Australia.

Rotary provides vital support to the project through:

- Access to tax deductibility for donations to the project. Rotary operates a scheme where approved projects can route project donations through a Rotary entity which provides a tax deductible donation receipt to donors. This scheme has proved invaluable in sustaining the support of our key donors.
- Support to teacher training teams. Two of teacher training teams have benefited from Rotary support through 1. Free access to specialised travel insurance and 2. Tax deductibility for some travel costs.
- Funding from the global Rotary International Foundation based in Chicago. The school toilet construction project was a partnership between Rotary Clubs in Sydney (Wahroonga and Chatswood) and Nepal (Mount Everest, Lalitpur), Rotary District 9685 and the Rotary Foundation.
- Ongoing financial support from the Rotary Club of Wahroonga.

The Nepal School Construction Project Team gratefully acknowledge the support of Rotary International and particularly the Rotary Club of Wahroonga



The Rotary Club of Wahroonga

Address: P.O. Box 13, Wahroonga NSW 2076
Website: www.d9680.rotary.org.au/wahroonga
Meetings: WARRAWEE BOWLING CLUB
Wednesday 7.15am for 7.30 to 8.30

District 9680, Sydney, Australia

Project Governance and Financial Control

The project is organised through a Nepali Government registered foundation, the Sambhav Nepal Foundation
<http://www.sambhavnepal.org>.

Government registration of Non Government Organisations in Nepal aims to ensure the integrity of foreign donor supported projects and involves:

- annual independent financial administration audit (we are provided with a copy)
- annual independent audit of activities against stated goals and
- background checks of key people, including police checks.

Prior to the commencement of a project Sambhav Nepal is required to prepare a formal project proposal for the Nepal Government's Social Welfare Council. Following Social Welfare Council approval of the proposal, the management committee of Sambhav Nepal are required to authorise in writing any expenditure.

Sambhav Nepal is independently audited annually. The audit report is submitted to:

The Social Welfare Council
The Tax Office
The Government District Office in Gorkha.

In addition both the Australian Embassy and Rotary International have stringent financial control, audit and reporting requirements.

Both the relevant local government authority, the Arupokhari Village Development Council, and the provincial government education authority in Ghorka are aware of our activities and have issued appropriate formal credentials for Sambhav Nepal to undertake the projects.

Project Contacts

Richard Jackson
Rotary Club of Wairoa
Wk – 9466 8270
rjackson@jacksonassociates.com.au

Alan Waldon
Wk – 9489 4345
waldon@tpg.com.au

Prem Kahtri
prem@sambhavnepal.org
Mobile 00977-985110222