

Pattale Community Health Centre

Newsletter

www.pattalecommunityhealth.org

March 2018

Welcome to the annual newsletter of the Pattale Health Trust. This is an update on our health centre in Pattale village, Nepal.

The newsletter is our main point of contact with donors and friends interested in the health project and life in Nepal. The following is a summary of what's been happening over the past twelve months.

We want to share some of our love for these admirable people and this wonderful country of Nepal. We hope you enjoy the stories and photographs.



*Pradip and Hemu
ready for school*

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 9 near the end of the newsletter. Big or small, all donations go direct to the centre. A little goes a long way in Nepal.

Don't underestimate the difference your contribution can make.

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 proper tar road has been pushed through in recent years although it is still quite precipitous, taking up to 10 hours from Kathmandu. Air transport into the area is available to Phaphlu an hour or so away by jeep but flights are unreliable.

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 home 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.

Nepal 2017

Some of the biggest news in Nepal last year was the holding of their first countrywide elections under the new Constitution. The process for writing and implementing the constitution begun after the end of the civil war in 2006 and has been long and fraught. To finally get to this stage is a major achievement.

The catastrophic earthquakes in 2015 impacted on the country's ability to move forward adding to the problems of long term enemies having to find ways to share power and make the structures of government work. The elections feel like the start of a new era. Friends of Nepal fervently hope this dream can come true.

Some background to the elections

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 is the present governing constitution of Nepal

The Nepalese Civil War was an armed conflict between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN-M) and the government of Nepal, fought from 1996 to 2006. The rebellion was launched by the CPN-M on 13 February 1996 with the main aim of overthrowing the Nepalese monarchy and establishing a People's Republic. It ended with the Comprehensive Peace Accord signed on 21 November 2006.

The King was stripped of political rights and his property nationalised.

The Hindu Kingdom of Nepal, also known as the Kingdom of Gorkha, was formed in 1768 by the unification of Nepal. It existed for 240 years until the abolition of the Nepalese monarchy in 2008.

As a result of the Civil War Nepal's tourism industry, which is its greatest source of foreign currency, suffered considerably.

(Wikipedia)

Hopefully with the elections, the constitution in place and a chance for the various arms of government to begin to operate more effectively, the country can start to focus on education and health and give its citizens a chance to plan and improve their lives.

In the Pattale district (Dorje's area) they have not had an elected representative for about 20 years. It could be argued they have not missed this to some extent.

With their normal resilience and energy they have looked after things themselves as best they can, repairing roads,

supplying water, getting what education they could source or afford. Many young people sought work outside the country and this stream of income from foreign workers kept the place afloat



during the war with their previous main source of income, tourism, severely restricted. There were a few wry comments wondering if having an elected representative would be of much use. However apparently the new elected rep is seen as a 'good guy' with the region's interests at heart.

Pattale 2017

Once again members of the Trust were able to visit the village in 2017. Denise and Tony spent several days there in November. This makes 5 years in a row that someone from the Trust has been able to visit the project. This is not a planned roster but has just worked out like that. Probably as we all like going so much! In 2018 Trust member Margaret Evans will make it 6 years in a row when she treks in April.

Denise and Tony were able to visit the clinic before doing a 10-day trek round the Pike Peak circuit. This newly opened route can be done easily from Pattale and runs through the lower Solukumbu area. This trek and others that are opening up in this area offer an opportunity for tourist development. The Pike Peak route has spectacular vistas of the Himalaya Everest ranges and traditional village life in an accessible walk - a great combination. They were fortunate with clear weather and had day after day of breathtaking views of white mountain giants. There were even a few yaks still on the high summer grazing though most had already headed down the hills



The Health Centre

One of the main aims of the visit was to meet the new staff and committee. There have been some challenges this last 12 months. There has been a complete change of staff with first our Female Health Worker (FHW) Chet Kumari moving on after three years with the centre. There was a period with no FHW while the committee sought a new person. They were keen to get the right mix of skills and finally found local woman Anita Karki.

Not long after this, our long term Community Medical Assistant (CMA) Binod decided to leave. Anita had to carry on by herself for some time, which she did very ably, managing a new position and the clinic on her own.

Binod had decided to set up his own consulting room with a supply of medicines for sale. He has married during his time with the centre and now has a new son to support as well. With the new road and increasing tourism the village is growing enough to support two services. Binod has gained experience and confidence during his employment with us. We wish him well. Tony and Denise visited his rooms while in the village and met his wife and new son.

The committee found an excellent replacement in Hem Kumar Rai who also trained at the Mission Hospital in nearby Okhaldhunga. He had been working for some years in local isolated villages.

The clinic was looking tidy and very well organized. Hem and Anita are working very well together. They have done stock takes, tidied shelves, produced charts and posters on various kinds of disease and health issues. They are keeping excellent records and generally putting in a good effort to find new ways to further serve the community.

Both are keen to do extra training and these extra services will fill gaps in the current local medical offerings. Anita is still the only female medical assistant locally and this service is much appreciated. We will explore further training to expand the services on offer. Routine dental care and care around pregnancy and birth will be a focus.

A new committee had been elected in June 2016 but no one from Australia has had the chance to meet them until now. It was a delight to see their enthusiasm and they have certainly stepped in and taken on the challenge, moving decisively to find new suitable staff. The new president is a young local man, Raj Kumar Magar. He is keen to find ways to bring better understanding of health issues to the village and improve the general health of all.

Retiring president Tek and other founding members are still very involved, advising and supporting the new team.

Medicine and consultations are sometimes provided free if patients cannot afford a contribution. The staff make the call on this.

Clinic hours are 10am – 3pm six days per week. At least one of the staff is there at all times and generally both. As Hem is living on site he is also available after hours for emergencies.

Patient numbers have remained pleasingly steady despite the slight disruption caused by changes in staff. The service is well regarded and utilised.



We welcome new staff Anita Karki and Hem Kumar Rai.



Denise is welcomed with traditional scarves (khata) and flowers with (from left) Hem, Anita and President Raj Kumar.

The trekking group donated funds to put in new bench covers and cushions and to paint the interior of the Centre. Dorje has made new advertising signage and erected them in the market and on the road into town.

It may be possible to offer the Centre's services to certain nearby isolated villages. There have been some requests around this, especially for elderly and infirm people who find it hard to travel. Hem and Anita have trialled this based on a request. The locals were enthusiastic and we will look at how this might best be managed. We are conscious that we are not a fully qualified medical unit and the staff need to operate within the limits of their qualifications. It is hard to explain this limitation to enthused villagers who have not had any regular medical help before.

What are CMAs and FHWs?

We don't have these roles in Australia. In Nepal they play an important part in the delivery of public health programmes in rural health centres. There are many levels of training for Health Assistants who can even go on to become surgical assistants and deliver anaesthesia.



Hem treats Baby Krishna for breathing difficulties.

New Faces

We welcome our new staff and president.

Hem Kumar Rai (CMA) is 32 years old. He is married to Preeti Rai with one son who is 5 years old. He trained at Mission Hospital Okhaldhunga, as had our previous two CMAs. He started at the centre in July 2017.

Anita Karki (FHW) started with the centre in August 2016. She is 21 years old, married but no children as yet.

She is from a local village Tingla that is near Beli Danda. She catches a bus each day up to Pattale that takes half an hour. The new roads are certainly helping cut down travel times where walking used to be the only way to get around.

She has the qualification of Female Health Worker (FHW). She studied the two-year course in Kathmandu and at Mission Hospital Okhaldhunga. She then worked for 6 months at the hospital.

Raj Kumar is the new president of the committee. His family have high standing in the village. His father who died some years ago donated the land where the local weekly market is held and other community land. A statue commemorates his life and watches over the village from high on the main road.

Raj also trained as a CMA so will have an understanding of the pressures of the job and the work to be done. He is a member of the local Red Cross and was on a training day for



Anita takes the blood pressure of fellow trekker Lesley.

emergency responses when we arrived in the village. He is keen to help the health centre expand its work and will investigate opportunities for workshops and training through the Red Cross. He is particularly interested in community and social issues.

The Village

Pattale has attracted the attention of the Tourism Board, which is looking to develop regional areas. Its grandstand view of the Everest Himalaya range makes it ideal for tourists who don't want to trek long distances but do want the experience of seeing the highest ranges in the world. This is being combined with a promotion of the area for religious tourism. A circuit of sites will be connected for pilgrims.

Roads are to be improved, money invested and plans made. A giant golden Buddha statue is proposed for a rise outside the village that will look towards the high mountains. Earthworks have started. It will certainly be spectacular with the grand vistas around it. A small tourist cabin complex has opened already supplementing the couple of lodges already available. Other cabins are under construction.



The area is ideal for trekking, taking in the amazing views and traditional farming and village life. Trekkers are increasingly looking for walks beyond the long time favourites of Annapurna and Everest Base camps.

As Pattale opens up it is possible to spend time here with home stays, local walks and guides, school and clinic visits. A visit is an accessible way to see some of the real life of country people.



Nepal Contacts

Nepal is not just about getting to the highest peaks. You can trek or 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 or 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 reading about Nepal and Pattale and the valuable work being done to assist the village and the region through your interest and donations.

Please continue to support us and please spread the word. A little goes a long way in Nepal. 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 organisations in Nepal, but there are also many smaller worthwhile projects which are making a direct difference to people's lives. The problem with large organisations is that they tend to support big projects and some of their money goes to administration, fundraising and the government of the target country.

If managed well and inclusively with the local community small NGOs can have a direct impact and remain sustainable. Small is beautiful! We believe that the Pattale Community Health project is one of these organisations.

Pattale Community Health Centre
Newsletter March 2018

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, our project and the Nepali people.

We welcome your enquiries.

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

Namaste.

Pattale Health Trust

Margaret Evans Ph. 03 52338395 margaretevans@westnet.com.au

Felicity Spear Ph.03 52761453 felicityspear@optusnet.com.au

Denise Rawling Ph. 0475866541 travevellerdee@gmail.com

Trust Ambassador

Michael Evans Ph. 03 52338395 m.evans@cfa.vic.gov.au

Founder

Peter Spear pahspear@gmail.com



Donations from Australia primarily pay for staff salaries, 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!

margaretevans@westnet.com.au

Cheques or money orders

can be sent to:

Mrs. Margaret Evans
Honorary Secretary
Pattale Health Trust
40 Manifold Street
Colac VIC 3250

The people of Pattale thank you.

