

**Friends of Himalayan Children Inc.**  
**Monthly Meeting: 22nd March, 2019**  
**Minutes**

**Attendance:** Som Tamang, Linda Alexander, Kay Smith, Breanna Glen, Steve Johnson, Sarah Hoyal, Mary Frances De Jourdan, Tim Trehearn, Peter Gaudron, Roz Pulley, Colin Devitt, Ellen Taiapa, Prince Taiapa, Antonia Gambi, Jonathan Clayton, Pascale Clayton, Daniel Clayton and Susan Devitt

**Apologies:** Brian Duncan, Kirsty Nancarrow and Jana Engler.

**1. Update:**

Som provided everyone with an update from Batase village:

-The hostel was carpeted before Winter at a cost of \$2,000, this will make Winter much more comfortable for the children at the hostel. The Take on Nepal Schoolies group made this suggestion when they were in Nepal in November.

-A 21st century Library was opened in Batase village on Christmas Day, this project was driven by Christina Lee in collaboration with FHC and Libraries Without Borders. Susan explained how this library is the first of its kind in Nepal and will have a huge impact on the lives of the villagers. The Take on Nepal Women Only Everest Base Camp Trekking group raised nearly \$20,000 which was donated towards the library project. Money was also raised through Christina's viral funding page, people from all over the world supported this incredible project.

-Som explained that the families of the kids who are not in the hostel but receive sponsorship come to the hostel every couple of months to receive support and funding for their children's education.

-Bijay is currently overseeing the running of the hostel and library in Batase.

-Steve Johnson explained that he would like to hold a fundraiser in the future to build a hot water shower at the hostel (**Action:** Peter Gaudron and Jonathan Clayton to check out the potential for building a shower during their time in Batase).

**2. Library Project:**

Som explained that a clear outline of the costs will be presented at the next meeting, the overall cost of the library was approx \$30,000. MF explained how the space looked when she was in Batase in September and how it has been transformed by the team.

Som explained that it's currently not a lending library and that it is open for 3-4 hours everyday. Bijay is taking classes from Batase school up to the library everyday. It is being put to great use.

**3. Nijita:**

Steve spoke about the support he is providing to Nijita, Nijita lives at the hostel with her 4 siblings, Nijita's parents are both alcoholics who were unable to care for her. Steve explained that he first met Nijita last September when he went to the village. Nijita has a dislocated hip and is unable to walk without support. In September Steve brought Nijita down to Kathmandu for x-rays and met with doctors to discuss what could

be done for Nijita, the doctors informed Steve that she could undergo an operation that would allow her to walk again.

Steve has recently returned from Nepal after spending a few weeks with Nijita in Pokhara where she is receiving medical treatment, she is also being taught how to live independently. Nijita will be operated on in May, a doctor from India will fly to Pokhara to perform the surgery. The cost of the operation and her stay in the hospital will be approx \$5,000. Steve has started a My Cause fundraising page to raise money for Nijitia's medical expenses.

**Action:** Steve to return to Nepal in May to be with Nijitia as she undergoes this life changing surgery and rehabilitation.

Everyone to share fundraising page to support Steve's fundraising efforts.

#### **4. Background Info:**

Som shared powerful and heartbreaking stories of some of the children living at the hostel. Som also explained how his Mum is "Mum" to so many kids in the village and that she gives freely from her own pocket to each of the children. Som also discussed how the hostel is breaking down expectations around the caste system in Nepal. The hostel is home to children from all castes, they are living happily together and growing up realising that the caste system is unnecessary.

#### **5. Tim and MF:**

Tim explained how over the past year FHC have not been engaging with the larger community and that a bigger effort is going to be made to reengage with people. This is going to be done through regular gatherings and also a newsletter. Tim is working with Angus McColl on the newsletter.

Tim and MF are working on sponsorships and memberships, we will be encouraging more people to become members through the website and offering incentives such as a discount at Himalayan Dreams and on entry into fundraising events. It was agreed that membership costs would be \$10 for an individual, \$5 for a student and \$20 for a family.

**Action:** Contact website developers (Julie and Richard Johnston) to set up payment for membership through the website.

Put information on kids being sponsored into the newsletter.

Feature a letter from a sponsored child in the newsletter.

#### **6. Fundraisers:**

It was agreed that more fundraisers are needed to fund the ongoing costs. A social night at the German Club was suggested for 8th of June.

**Action:** Susan to contact Chris Zilm regarding booking the venue for social gathering.

#### **7. Meeting Closed:**

7.45pm