



# Newsletter May 2021

## CWA Children's Home in Pokhara, Nepal

We are very happy to send you this newsletter straight from the CWA Children's Home itself.

Due to the travel restrictions, we were only able to make our trip to Nepal after a delay of nine months. After having organized all obligatory documents, we were able to fly to Kathmandu on April 1st, pandemic notwithstanding.

Our presence was required for a number of important decisions, for several control exercises, for meetings with management c.q. board members, and for a few new projects. Besides, in Switzerland, our longing to meet the children and staff again had been increasing day by day.



We decided that we did not want to spend the mandatory quarantine in Kathmandu and were able to fly to Pokhara immediately after arrival in Kathmandu. So, fortunately, we spent the quarantine in our guesthouse near the Children's Home.

Thanks to rain on the day previous to our arrival, and the gorgeous weather on the day itself, we got a direct domestic flight to Pokhara. Due to extreme drought in the weeks before our arrival, countless forest fires had raged uncontrollably across the

country, and a sooty smog covered the valleys. The smog had prevented a clear view for the pilots, and small airplanes had been grounded. Unfortunately, after the few clear days, new fires have started, and many places are again enveloped in thick smog.



The children and staff received us with their customary great warmth and joy, and from the balcony of the guest house we exchanged greetings and ideas.

During the five-day quarantine, we waved the children out when they passed by in their school bus on the way to school and welcomed them back in the afternoons.



Dhurba, the chef in the guesthouse, and his son Dharma, stashed us with delicious Nepali dishes during the quarantine, and helped us greatly with our acclimatization process and with getting through this time.



At the end of the quarantine the children in the Home warmly welcomed us with cards they had specially painted to surprise us. It was, of course, mandatory to wear masks.

Since the schools opened in mid-December, the children have gotten used to wearing masks on the bus, in school and outside the Home uninterruptedly.

It is not easy to keep distance from kids that we have grown so close to! Even if it is quite uncomfortable with the rising temperatures, wearing a mask remains compulsory at meetings in closed rooms.



The children were very happy with the many letters sent by Barbara's last class and immediately started reading the English translations. All letters will be answered and given to the class on our return to Switzerland.



With the borders open, the rapidly increasing number of corona infections in India is causing increasing numbers of cases in Nepal too. This has so far mainly struck the south of the country. Yet, since a dangerous double mutant of the virus has been reported, shortly after the Nepali New Year celebrations in mid-April, schools were closed again.

Online classes started already on the second day of this school lockdown. The effort involved in organizing optimal support to nine different grade levels is enormous.



The children sit in front of laptops, tablets and smartphones in every nook and cranny of the Home. The WiFi network and Internet connections are often overloaded, and on top of that, the increasing instances of load-shedding lately have also been causing many interruptions. Fortunately, just before we left Europe, a good laptop and tablet had been donated to the Home. Both are in full use since arrival.

Because last year the school remained closed for nine months, the children are already familiar with the difficulties of online lessons. With the Nepali calendar year in mid-April, the school year also usually ends. Yet, this year, the school term has been extended with 6 weeks. The current lockdown, however, is supposed to take only four weeks, but it is unclear yet whether the annual exams will take place afterwards.



Continuing the handicraft classes was, unfortunately, not possible during the long lockdown.

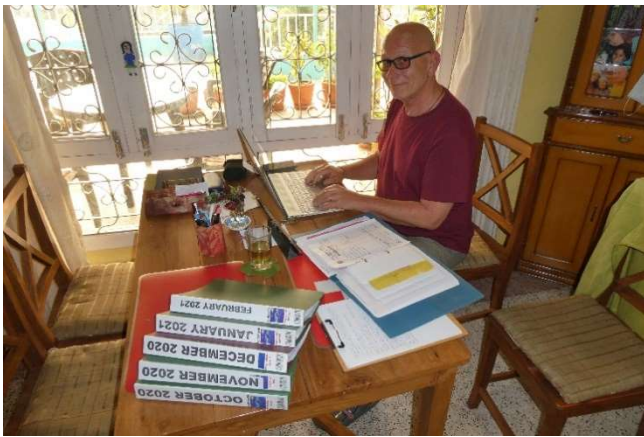
Now, all fully masked, Barbara resumed class, and the children saw out new motifs from plywood. They are very happy to be creative again.



A week ago Barbara has started up the “Christmas card workshop” with the girls. Wrapping paper from Switzerland is used to create beautiful Christmas trees. After further processing these are sold as Christmas cards at the big autumn fair in our home town. It brings great pleasure to the children to work with the gorgeous, colorful papers!



The boys diligently helped dig holes for installing nets to protect our green houses against hail. The green houses are made up of plastic screens. Many years these screens are damaged irreparably by hail and then have to be replaced. We hope that by installing nets the screens will be better protected against the hail stones. That will reduce the need for new screens, thereby reducing replacement costs and decreasing installation costs.



Already during our quarantine period, Peter started to check the receipts and invoices from July 2019 to the present, as we have not been in Nepal from that time. We do, on a regular basis receive monthly reports and invoices in Switzerland. Yet, any on-site inspection of the book keeping is always good. Our high transparency requirements for the accounting system were mainly met, and only a few minor matters for improvement were revealed in this thorough audit. We discussed and resolved the results of this audit with all relevant staff members, like Prakash, the accountant, Bijay, the manager, and the relevant board members.



As these last two years we had not been in the Children's Home and our contacts had exclusively been through Bijay –as the manager--, one of the first things we did was to conduct detailed work experience interviews with all members of staff. We have found that it tends to be hard to obtain open and honest answers in such dialogues.

More often than not, participants feel obliged to leave out anything negative in an attempt to avoid upsetting us.

After some encouragement, though, the consequences of the extended lockdown with its added tremendous stress and related personal experiences were reported on.

Since the cost of living has in recent years risen sharply again (approx. 28% on average), we need to raise the wages again. We also made inquiries into further training courses for the female educators and the management team, with the aim of improving the quality of their work further.

We expressed our gratitude to each and every staff member for their dedicated work. The annual check-ups by various government agencies produced very satisfactory results and for the sixth time in a row, the CWA Children's Home has been awarded the special status of "Grade A Children's Home"!



Bishal and Santosh were supposed to graduate from college last spring, but the lockdown made that impossible. In February of this year, they were finally able to take their exams. Both graduated with good grades and they were released from the Children's Home in mid-March. We will, however, continue to support them during their ensuing studies.

Santosh has moved into a room in the house of distant relatives and is studying computer science at Pokhara Engineering College.

Bishal shares a small apartment with his sister and wants to graduate with a BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) from the Pokhara Lincoln Institute. Both courses last eight semesters and cost between CHF 8,000 and CHF 10,000. In addition, for the period of six months they will receive a "bridging allowance" and we will help with furnishing their rooms. As college times are scheduled from early morning until noon, they will have to find part-time jobs in the afternoons in order to earn their own living.



Only three days ago, our CWA family has grown with another new member. Yujan Gurung (center) is seven years old and comes from the Syanja district, about 130 km from Pokhara. His father died four years ago from a lightning strike. His mother has a heart disease and is physically impaired: she can only do the odd short job. Yujan was left in the care of relatives who, unfortunately, couldn't satisfactorily take care of him either.

The district administration requested our Children's Home to admit Yujan and furnished us with all the required documents. Yujan appears quite healthy, yet he still had to take a PCR test before being allowed to enter our Home and until the result of the test was announced as negative, he was kept away from the other kids as much as possible and had to always wear a mask in the building. Yujan will certainly, quickly find new friends in our Home.



We very much hope that the situation of the Covid pandemic in India will soon improve and that Nepal will be spared a large, second wave.

While observing all necessary hygiene measures, we like to stay on in the Children's Home as planned until the end of June and continue our work here.

We, the children and all staff wish you good health and send warm greetings from Nepal.

Barbara and Peter

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