

## Newsletter September 2025

### CWA Children's Home in Pokhara, Nepal

Dear Friends and Supporters of the CWA Children's Home in Pokhara

We are delighted to report directly from the children's home with this newsletter.

***First, some information on the current situation in Nepal (as of September 15).***

*After the nationwide protests and the massive violence by both demonstrators and the police, the situation has somewhat calmed down. The military now shows little presence during the day but ensures compliance with the nightly curfew. A non-partisan former judge has been appointed as interim prime minister, and new elections are scheduled for March 2026. As of today, schools and most shops are open again.*

*During the riots, many police stations, government buildings, and hotels in which government members were involved were vandalized and set on fire.*

*In addition to the political situation, the economic situation is also very tense, and further price increases are feared due to food shortages.*

*Because the schools were closed, we spent a lot of time with the children last week, talking about the background of the protests and teaching them how to recognize and deal with the many fake news reports.*



Before reporting from the children's home, here is a personal update. At the end of March, we set off with our converted old fire truck to drive overland to Nepal. Loaded with about 600 kg of relief supplies for the children's home, and together with our friends Herbert Albrecht and his wife May, we travelled via the Balkans, through Turkey, Iran, and into Pakistan.

After 9,500 km, we unfortunately had to interrupt our journey in Lahore. Due to the consequences of a terrorist attack in Kashmir, the conflict between Pakistan and India escalated again, and the border between the two states was closed. Barbara had already returned from Quetta to accompany her mother in her final hours.

Since it was not foreseeable when the border would reopen, we parked the vehicles in a safe place near Lahore and flew back to Switzerland. The border between Pakistan and India is still closed, but we very much hope that the situation will ease soon. Currently, we are planning to fly back to Lahore in mid-December and to continue our overland journey to Nepal. The return trip to Switzerland is scheduled for February 2026.

All those interested are warmly invited to follow our journey with many photos via this [link](#) in the browser or through the Polarsteps app.

---

After the funeral of Barbara's mother, we flew back to Nepal at the end of June to continue our work at the CWA Children's Home.



First, we stayed in Kathmandu for a few days to discuss with our suppliers the orders for the Basel Autumn Fair before traveling on to Pokhara to be with the children.

At the children's home we were once again warmly welcomed by all the children, staff, and employees. It is always a great joy for everyone when we meet again after a year.



In mid-April, two girls were admitted to the children's home. Aroshi, 5 years old, and her sister Babita Gurung, 7 years old, lost both parents in the last eight months. They had been temporarily housed with relatives who already live at the subsistence level with their family and cannot additionally provide for the two girls. Both are very cheerful children and have already successfully settled into the CWA family.



The two girls quickly made new friends. They are lovingly accompanied by their "Didis" (older sisters), attend school with great motivation, and enthusiastically play with the other children.



These two young men left the children's home last year. Solan (left) is now in Iraq, working in a restaurant with his mother, whom he had not seen for eight years.

Bipin (right) gave up his IT engineering studies, as he found them too difficult. He is now learning Japanese and, after passing the language test, wants to work in Japan. His brother has been living there for several years and can help him find a job.



Currently, about 4.5 million Nepalis are working abroad, most of them in India and the Gulf states. This trend has increased significantly in the last eight months - during this period 280,000 new work permits were issued. Most of them are young men who leave the country due to the lack of prospects for secure jobs. Abroad, they can often earn many times the salary even in simple jobs. Remittances now account for over 20% of Nepal's GDP—an incentive for many families to send members abroad.



Jeevan, who lived in the children's home for 17 years, also wants to leave the country and work in Dubai.

In many conversations, we have tried to motivate the young men first to complete training in Nepal and then work abroad as "skilled workers." But the lure of supposedly quick money and the idea of building something later in Nepal with the savings is very strong.



We are also pleased to report outstanding achievements. The young people Pratik (17) – completion of 10th grade, and Manisha (18) – 11th grade at Management College, both passed their exams with the top grade A+. They studied diligently and are rightly very proud of their results.



At the end of September, seven young people will leave the children's home, having completed 12th grade. Samira wants to complete a Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA), Aleya, Isha, and Nishan want to pursue a Bachelor in Business Studies (BBS), Niruta is looking for a job, Sapana wants to earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and Bishal will start training as a cook.

This autumn, more children will be admitted to the home. Our management has already been asked whether we have free capacity for three boys aged 8–9 who recently became orphans. The very complex admission process has already begun, but documents from the "Local Child Right Officer" and the "Local Government" are still missing.





It has become a tradition to take new group photos each year, with and without school uniforms. In the front row on the right stand our six juniors, who attend the Himali School in the children's village Bakunde from kindergarten to third grade. Children in red-and-white uniforms go to the Little Step Secondary School, and the young people in gray-and-white attend college.



The children are picked up by the school buses at 9:15 in the morning and return in the afternoon between 4:30 and 5:00.





After a snack and an hour of free time, it is time for homework. Especially the older children often have to continue working on their homework in the study room after dinner. The following morning, between 7:15 and 8:30, is also often used for homework.

The school year in Nepal begins with the new year, which in our calendar falls around mid-April. Throughout the year there are four quarterly exams that assess the current level of knowledge in all subjects. In one week the second exams of this school year will begin, and the children are studying diligently.

---



At the beginning of August, the Raksha Bandhan Festival, or Rakhi, was celebrated at the children's home. In addition to its important religious aspect in Hinduism, it is a family celebration to strengthen the bond between siblings. The girls/sisters wear their most beautiful dresses, tie a "Rakhi" (a colourfully braided band) around their brothers' wrists, and the brothers, in return, promise to protect and support their sisters. Both apply a Tikka on the forehead, and sweets and small gifts are exchanged.

---



This year again, the big birthday party was the highlight of the children's stay. In preparation, we searched the internet for new group games, which, due to the great heat, were played not outside on the lawn but on our covered balcony. Since it is not easy to find something suitable and exciting for children aged 5 to 20, we also created new variations of earlier games.





After dividing into groups, we began with a funny race using balls and cones. Then it became trickier with paper cups and clothespins, before the pendulum game required fine motor skills to knock cups off the table.



The fun continued with a variation of the ice floe race. In between, there was a break with delicious ice cream.





A special challenge were the mini table tennis games, which we had received as a gift in Switzerland from Irene, a friend of Barbara. Teams scored points by rallying the ball as often as possible within one minute.



Half-filled water bottles had to be pulled across the finish line by rolling up a string, and a bamboo stick had to be carried by two people without letting it fall - only possible through good cooperation.





After a short break, the older children continued with a big quiz covering many areas of knowledge, a skill task, and word puzzles, while the younger children collected additional points for their teams with Barbara through further activities and a Kim game.



After the delicious dinner in the lovingly decorated dining room, the birthday cake, eagerly awaited by the children, was served. Traditionally, the ritual is part of the celebration in which all the children thank the organizers for their efforts and, together with staff and guests, visualize three wishes - one for themselves, one for the CWA family, and one for the well-being of the whole world - which are sent to heaven with the blowing out of the candles. Afterwards, the cake was cut and enjoyed with delight.



To conclude, and as another highlight of the day, each child received a birthday bag, individually packed by Barbara, with gifts, toys, craft and painting materials, T-shirts, toiletry kits for the girls, or whatever else was needed.

Everything was quickly unpacked and tried out.





Aroshi and Babita proudly presented their new butterfly wings, and our four little wild ones their colourful carnival wigs. The joy was immense, eyes sparkled, and the children expressed heartfelt thanks - a reward for the huge amount of work.



Finally, there was also a surprise for us. On behalf of all the children, the older girls had created a beautiful poster to thank us for the great work and the special birthday celebration.



The following weekend, the next occasion was already celebrated: Father's Day. Father's Day in Nepal has a similar meaning as Mother's Day. In the beautifully decorated meeting room, the "fathers of the children's home" (from left: Prakash, Bijay, Peter, Dhurba, and Amber) were honoured.





As gestures of appreciation, the fathers received thank-you cards from the children. A plate with special dishes was also served, from which each was fed a spoonful of yogurt. As is customary, the fathers also thanked the children for the special occasion and encouraged them to continue studying diligently and to show good manners.



Since Barbara was not present during this year's Mother's Day in spring, she was also honored on Father's Day. Of course, a photo with the female staff of the home was part of it.

It was an extremely successful event, which the older children had prepared and carried out entirely without support from the management team. The beautiful poster also brought great joy to all the fathers.



And soon the next festival was on the program - Teej, a three-day Hindu festival in Nepal, celebrated by women with much dancing to honour the devotion of the goddess Parvati to the god Shiva. Married women fast for the well-being and long life of their husbands, while unmarried women pray for a good husband.

The festival honors the strength and resilience of Nepali women and also provides a platform for social criticism of gender inequality. At the children's home, the girls also celebrate the festival with much dancing late into the night, while the boys and men take over the work in the kitchen.





Some of the female staff have time off and celebrate with their families. The male kitchen crew prepared special, delicious dishes, which everyone enjoyed immensely.



In addition to the individual sessions some children have with therapists from the NGO Nepal House Kaski, there are several workshops each year for all children. This summer the juniors worked on the topics "Safety and Mindfulness," while the seniors focused on "Psychological Wellbeing and Self-Care."





For three and a half years now, the children’s home has had weekly karate lessons. In the meantime, 16 children have already earned the brown belt. Milan, 18 years old, won the district championship this year in the weight class up to 60 kg and is very proud of it. Even the youngest children train regularly and diligently.

---



Music teacher Amber still comes twice a week and teaches the children guitar, keyboard, and Madal, a Nepali drum. The older children also enjoy practicing in their free time and perform at various cultural festivals at the home. Yujan on keyboard and Prabin on guitar even gave a little concert on Barbara’s birthday.

---



On September 7, the annual “Annual General Meeting” took place at the children’s home. Comparable by its statutes to the general assembly of associations in Switzerland, in Nepal the focus is on the public presentation of the organization.





As “special guests,” numerous representatives from politics, the children’s home network, the child protection officer, various social associations, the “Mother Group,” and local companies were invited. Some former children, now young adults, were also present. To document all activities and expenses, a “Social Audit” was read for more than an hour, prepared by a journalist based on information from the management and the audit report.

---



As an NGO, the CWA Children’s Home is subject to strict controls by local and national authorities. Even though the home was awarded “Grade A” for the 11th consecutive time as one of the best-managed NGOs in Gandaki Province, Peter always carries out the annual audit during our stay. Although we receive monthly reports and statements in Switzerland, this does not replace our own verification of the accounts by checking all receipts on site.

---



This year we were able to bring only a few new games from Switzerland, since most of them are still waiting in our bus in Lahore for the onward journey to Nepal. But some Lego pieces that Peter had brought back were a huge hit with both the little and the older ones. By now, we have a fairly large collection of valuable games that always bring the children great joy during regular game evenings.





Every year the children look forward to making new bracelets from rubber bands, beads, and letter stones. Fortunately, we still have enough supplies of these at the home.



Soap bubbles always fascinate both the younger and the older children.



The playground is used daily for exercise, play, and fun.





Irene, our sponsor of the mini table tennis sets, is busily knitting beautiful jackets for all the children and staff. Some jackets we have already brought along. The children are thrilled with the colourful, soft, and warm knitted jackets, which they will be able to use well for the coming winter season.

---







The new children also regularly learn in our handcraft lessons how to use the fretsaw, sandpaper, and paints. There they can develop their creativity and discover their talents. Unique “art objects” are created, which can be found throughout the home as decorations.

---



Every three months all the food stored in the “Survival Room” (for emergencies and disasters) is replaced. Before the new delivery arrives, the children help to transport the supplies into the kitchen storage.



Unfortunately, some rats (called “tulo musa,” / big mice, in Nepal) had made themselves comfortable with food and clothing, so we had to fit all shelves with wire mesh and doors.

---





Climate change was also clearly noticeable to us this summer. Average temperatures were above those of recent years. The many unbearably hot days had a paralyzing effect on work, and every day we were dripping with sweat. Despite the enormous heat, tights, closed shoes, and jackets (for the college students) were compulsory. What torture!



And although it often rained, rainfall during this monsoon was significantly below average. At the beginning of September, for the first time this year, we had a clear view of Machapuchare (Mt. Fishtail), often shrouded in clouds during the monsoon. With a height of 6,993 m and a distance of only 25 km, it is also considered Pokhara's local mountain.

---

Again this year, the cost of living in Nepal has risen sharply. The government is projecting an inflation rate of around 8% for 2025. In reality, however, some food prices, such as vegetables, cooking oil, and pulses, have risen by more than 25%. Climate-related crop failures are also cited as reasons. In addition, VAT exemptions for certain products have been abolished, there are export restrictions on goods from India, and minimum prices for rice are increasing.



We are pleased that with our small farm we can, depending on the season, produce between 50% and 80% of the required vegetables ourselves through organic farming.

---



Since the water from our own spring is no longer sufficient for drinking water supply, especially in the dry season, we plan to drill a deep well in the next dry season at the beginning of 2026.



For next year, a major overhaul of the photovoltaic system is planned. The lead batteries will then be 10 years old and thus at the limit of their average lifespan. To continue to ensure the home's power supply without reliance on the public grid and the usual power outages, we must plan the replacement of the batteries in good time.

With the upcoming investments in the expansion of infrastructure, the autonomy of the children's home will be further strengthened. To make this possible and to cope with the annual price increases, we continue to rely on your support.



With the planned admission of the three new boys, 26 children (14 girls, 12 boys) will live in the home. Thanks to your support they receive a good school and vocational education, a balanced diet, good medical care, and loving care from trained staff and therapists.

For this we thank you very warmly, also on behalf of all the children and staff, and wish you all the best, good health, and a wonderful autumn season.

Warm greetings from Pokhara,  
Barbara and Peter