



# Newsletter September 2021

## CWA Children's Home in Pokhara, Nepal

Shortly after in our newsletter of the beginning of May we reported about the second lockdown and the rapidly increasing number of covid cases here in Nepal, we had the first positive corona test in our Children's Home. Puja, the second youngest member of the CWA family, showed a mild fever and symptoms of a cold. After her positive test she was isolated immediately.



After arriving in Nepal at the beginning of April, we had, on the internet, ordered 50 antigen self-tests and had them sent to our friend and solar engineer, Herbert in Germany. Our hunch was that Nepal might suffer a shortage of test kits. This hunch turned out to be spot on. And according to plan, fortunately, Herbert was, in early May, able to bring these self-tests to us in Nepal.

After translating the instructions of use into English we had detailed discussions with the management team as to how best handle the tests. Then the first test was carefully applied to Puja. The positive result was instantly confirmed by a PCR test. At that point we had our first "Corona Case" and we were deeply aware that the number of infections would not remain just at one. Within a matter of days, more girls started to report symptoms. They too were isolated and the girls who tested positive were allocated a separate isolation room.



As more and more children showed symptoms, our manager Bijay requested the Social Ministry for tests for all children and staff. After a few inquiries the request was granted. In May the Ministry sent a mobile test team to our Home to carry out 45 tests. 17 of these tests turned out to be positive. A few more girls, some boys and a member of the kitchen staff all tested positive. This meant that more isolation rooms had to be allocated for all those who had already tested positive and for those children that at this point in time still tested negative but showed symptoms, in order to prevent further spread of the infections.



Finally, both of the girls' bedrooms, a staff room, a study room, a boys' bedroom and the therapy room were declared *isolation rooms*. When even more children started to complain of symptoms, another room in the Workshop House and one in our guesthouse were set aside.



All in all, the effort to organize the isolation-regime turned out to be gigantic. Isolating our patients in different rooms and distributing meals to them three times a day, is one thing. To organize the avoidance of simultaneous use of sanitary facilities and --after use-- disinfect them on the spot repeatedly, is another. Organizing this and meanwhile keeping tabs on the general health of our young patients, was another aspect we were confronted with. Not least of the problems we met was how to motivate our patients to maintain the

isolation while encouraging daily use of the playground through separate exits in the building. To top this all of, the online classes for each specific grade also had to be organized at the same time.



In the middle of this all, we both worked without the benefit of having had a vaccination before our trip to Pokhara. Around the middle of May, we too started to show mild symptoms of a cold, but, fortunately, our rapid tests returned negative. As a result, we labored on to help realize a partly regular daily routine in the Home. The Nepali health system had, by this time, completely collapsed around us. Hospitals were no longer accepting patients and the international airport had closed, making it impossible for us to leave the country. We are therefore very grateful to have stayed healthy.



For the Home we organized the purchase of extra vitamins to be administered to both the children and staff on a daily basis. We had also brought sufficient vitamin C for ourselves from home. To add to our precautions, we also drank daily a potion from the roots of the Gurja plant (Indian Guduchi, or bot.: *Tinospora cordifolia*), which grows in large numbers in the surrounding forests. These roots form the essence of a well-known Ayurveda medicine to strengthen the immune system. They were mixed and boiled with turmeric, ginger and pepper, thus producing quite a bitter and spicy brew that is very aromatic and healthy.



Finally, at the end of June, all children tested negative! This was just in time for the annual grand birthday party, and life in the Children's Home returned to normal.



Just before the second lockdown was imposed and air traffic suspended, our "solar father" Herbert Albrecht arrived from Germany. He brought a new inverter for the photovoltaic system and replaced the defective inverter. As a result, now, fortunately, the Home is off-grid again. Everyone was relieved and the candles and emergency lights were put back in storage, while the water pumps and other devices could resume their daily operation on solar power.



For over 10 years, Herbert has been volunteering in Nepal for various projects. For us he designed and installed the photovoltaic systems. He regularly carries out maintenance and repairs to our devices. He also takes care of the proper functioning of our biogas installation, and repairs with great serenity all gadgets like flashlights, irons, water filters and rice cookers.



Lately, to our regrets, building has been rampant in the vicinity of the Children's Home. To reach the new houses, roads were milled into the steep mountain slopes. In the immediate vicinity of our water source a new road was created and a lot of soil moved. A number of large boulders rolled into the spring wiping away our wall and causing the water to spill away. The normal water supply from the spring to the Children's Home was totally disrupted.



The actors responsible for the damage do not bother, though. We were fortunate that a neighbor helped us out by supplying and sponsoring water to the Children's Home until the spring was repaired. Boys from the Home smashed the boulders with a sledgehammer, cleaned the water catchment, and then our gardener with building experience, Mina, re-cemented the wall and floor of the spring socket. And now, water from the spring can refill the water tanks of the Home again.



Shortly before the new school year started, we arranged a long-awaited change of school for all younger children. At their school, our children had regularly been complaining about worsening conditions, from dirty water to repeated beatings and unfair behavior of the teachers. Unfortunately, in spite of our attempts, little had changed. To improve on this situation, all younger children --up to class 5-- will henceforth attend the Himali School in the nearby Children's Village of Bhakunde. This school and the children's village are financially supported and regularly supervised by a German aid organization.



We have for many years known both the German and Nepalese people in charge there and are delighted with the Himali School having gained the permission to teach children from outside too.

Our children were given a tour of the school before the start of the school year. They were immediately passionate about the clean rooms, the light in the classrooms, the furnishings, the smaller size of the classrooms, the gentle teachers and the gorgeous

surroundings. As, like all schools, the Himali School had to remain closed, and for a number of weeks, Himali organized Home-teaching by sending two of their teachers to our Home to teach the CWA children on site for 2 hours daily. What a wonderful service to provide for the students! Thanks a lot Himali! In the meantime, everywhere in Nepal, online lessons have resumed as schools are not allowed to reopen yet.

This year, the rainy season in Nepal was again severe. The heavy rains caused major floods, land- and mudslides. Due to the many new roads, muddy earth and lots of water was washed down onto our fields, burying the crops. After in March hail had crushed many young plants, in June the monsoon washed away a large part of the harvest.



In spite of the many corona cases in the Children's Home, we were finally able to celebrate the annual birthday party shortly before our departure. The children were very eager for this day of games and play, which, due to the pandemic, last year, unfortunately, had to be cancelled.





This year too, Corona changed our plans as neither a trip to the swimming pool was possible, nor did the muddy meadow allow many games to be played outside. Instead, though, everybody enjoyed themselves on the large balcony and in the Home playing new, amusing team games, watching movies, eating ice cream, and solving quizzes. This was topped off by a delicious dinner, a birthday cake and small gifts. After the long and many days full of sickness and isolation, the happiness and joy did not know any bounds and the party was enjoyed comprehensively!



The international airport in Kathmandu stayed closed until the beginning of July. We managed, however, to fly back to Switzerland with one of the first planes and within only 10 days from the day we had originally planned our departure



We are extremely grateful to have been able to have spent at least these three months from the originally planned full year in the Home. This turned out to be a very intense time, in which all children and staff, all of us together, survived the pandemic with colors.



Through his contacts, Bijay, our manager, organized for all employees of our Children's Home the two shots of the Chinese vaccine. As to Nepal, after a short dip in July, infections are continuing to rise and the lockdown has been extended time and again.

The corona pandemic and climate-related massive crop failures in India and Nepal have caused another dramatic increase in the costs of living. This year alone, an inflation rate of 10% is expected. After a pause of three years and in order to ensure that our employees' real wages do not fall, we have decided to increase their wages correspondingly. We also have to adjust the maintenance budget for the Home regarding the current year.

We wish you continued good health and send greetings to everyone

Barbara and Peter



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