

## **Introduction**

From September 2006 to May 2007, I went to Cape Town, South Africa to do eight months of voluntary work. I worked at three different projects, at a school for street children, in an afternoon daycare centre for children in the age 5-14 years and at a children's hospital. This made me very much aware of what volunteering can do, thinking of how much both I and the workplaces achieved from the work. Therefore, when returning to Denmark I wanted to continue to do similar work. From my contacts to Dialogos I got aware of a need of volunteers in a specific project in Kathmandu, at the orphans home "Slisha's home". I saw a great meaning in sending other young people to work as volunteers as I did. With my experience from South Africa I know what is needed to get the best result out of the voluntary projects. On this background I applied for money to go to Kathmandu to research on the possibilities. I got three weeks in Nepal supported economically, and after being there I feel very overwhelmed by all the energetic and idea rich personalities I have met.

From my trip I have found so many great potential voluntary projects. The most interesting ones are these:

### **Slisha's Home, Conscience International Academy**

Slisha's home is an orphan's home housing children who have lost their parents during the war.

The volunteers will be teaching the children in English and math at Conscience International Academy, and take part in management work at the school and at the children's home.

### **Children's food programme-nepal, schools for underprivileged children**

200 street children are given food every evening, and scholarships are given to underprivileged children who show progress at their, for this established, preschool. Another school is donated by an Italian organization, and is educating around 150 underprivileged children for free.

The volunteers will teach at the schools, might arrange a concert played by and for street children and on longer term help developing a centre for street children.

### **Young Star Club, Salleri**

YSC are the main Nepalese co-operation NGO of the Dialogos Nepal group. They have a lot of projects activating and engaging children from the area through different activities like sports and radio making. The volunteers will be teaching in English, working with radio or/and help arranging afternoon activities for the children.

### **Teacher's training in the new Dialogos project area.**

In the VDCs Mukli, Deusa and Jubu 10-15 teachers will be gathered for whom the volunteers will run a program helping to improve the English level and teaching methods.

### **English teacher in a Nepalese village.**

The volunteer will stay in a village, be a part of the local environment and teach English at the local school.

### **Tri Jyoti High secondary school**

The volunteers will teach at the school, and research on the possibilities of establishing an activity centre for children in the area.

### **Gurukul and DABALI**

Exchange theatre project between Danish and Nepalese young people.

### **Chalsa, Pokhara, Jawalekhel**

These are Tibetan camps. The volunteers will be teaching the monks in English.

The projects above are listed after my knowledge and accessibility, which means the Slisha's Home and Conscience International Academy, is the most secure project, and the one I have got the best knowledge about. Hopefully I will manage to send the first three volunteers to join this project already from the beginning of February 2008. The last projects need more research though, but I have enough contact details to set up all projects if any are interested.

## **Projects**

### **Slisha's Home**

Description:

Slisha's Home was started in april 2007 by Sangheeta Shresta. The childrens home is based in a rented house in Kapan, Kathmandu, and houses twenty orphan children in the age 4-14 years. All the children are characterised by loss of family/caretakers, and more than half of the children have lost one or two of their parents from maoist attacks.

Slisha's Home focuses very much, on creating an environment as similar to a normal family home environment as possible. To achieve this, a "mother" and a "father" are hired to stay at the Slisha's Home to take care of all the children together with their own two. This seem to work out very well, as the parents are doing a tremendous job, making food and being parents to all twenty children.

In the house they are taught to call each other brother and sister, father and mother, which also empower the feeling of belonging. Also for helping this purpose and to prevent any kind of discrimination all the children have been given the surname Slisha.

Besides the parents, a manager, who also lives in the house, is hired to take care of all management at the place, this includes:

- budget
- having meetings with the children every third month talking to them about
  - their future plans
  - problems at school and at home
  - what they like to do
- running anapana meditation session and story sharing with the children, twice a day.

The meditation and story sharing activities help the children to share memories, calm down, get in touch with their emotions and in that way deal with their past in a healthy way.

The children arrived at the house on two dates within 14 days in April. From talking to the manager I understood that it has been a huge challenge to deal with the children especially for the first four months. All of the children came from the country side but from different areas and casts, so a lot of them were speaking different languages and not all of them even understood nepahli. This did cause a lot of big communication problems in the beginning, which does not make the work with traumatised children easier. Despite to all this, from visiting the place I found that the children appeared amazingly calm and harmonised.

The manager has tolled me a lot about the problems they had to deal with in the beginning. A lot of relatives to the children were calling, and passing by the home all the time. She had to tell them even to stay away or take care of the children, as the children were not able to settle at the place if relatives were disturbing all the time. One child was taken back by her grandparents but except from this the relatives begun to stay away along the way. Some of the children tried to trick the manager to let them go back. One of the girls, Salima, asked the manager to let her go back for her sisters wedding ceremony. When the manager would not let her, Salima began a hunger strike. The wedding ceremony though turned out to be a lie, and after a big clash between the manager and the girl based on this, Salima came crying back to the manager. She said sorry and did then announce, that she was now ready to stay at Slisha's home for the next 12 years.

Makker  
ansvarsområde

The volunteer's tasks:

The volunteer's tasks at the home are to play with the children and talk to them, help them with their homework, lighten the workload of the manager and maybe arrange creative activities for the children.

The slogan of Slisha is "to raise children's voices", so Sangheeta are also welcoming small projects to support this as well. It might be articles about the children's stories, theatre or something like.

Worries:

The English level of the children, are very low, so the communication might be a problem in the beginning. Fortunately the manager speaks English, and can help translate.

## **Conscience International Academy**

Describtion:

Sangheeta Shresta has arranged an agreement with the nearby situated private school Conscience International Academy, that the children of Slisha's Home can get education at the school paying 30.900 Rps per 6 months for the children. This is half the actual price, which is arranged as the children's home can't afford to pay full price. As compensation though, Sangheeta has promised to find volunteers to teach English and math at the school. Minimum two volunteers will be needed, to teach at the school and four are the maximum.

The volunteer's tasks:

The volunteers will be teaching English and Math at the school in grade 4-6, and maybe have some extra lessons in the nursery class. Besides this they will be a part of the management at the school and will be working with:

- How to develop quality education, using the few resources of the school.
- Prepare and run meetings with the parents every third month.
- Train the teachers to improve their English level and teaching methods.

The principal and Sangheeta will of course help them through.

If three volunteers are sent, they will be teaching 10 hours per week per volunteer, of which 2 hours are management. Besides the 10 hours on the school they will have to prepare the lessons too. The children go to school from Sunday to Friday, 10am- 4pm so this is when the volunteers will be teaching.

If the volunteers want to arrange creative, sports activities, there is time for this every Friday afternoon at the school.

### **Children's food programme-Nepal**

Description:

With my background as volunteer in Cape Town, I was interested in investigating the conditions of the homeless people in Kathmandu. One day, on the corner of Durbar square in Kathmandu I met two local guides, who turned out to know quite a lot about the subject. They sat up a meeting between me and Rajesh Shahi, who works as volunteer with underprivileged children and street children in a lot of different projects. The first thing he did explain to me was the following:

You have to distinguish between two types of street children.

Type 1. These Children have even lost their parents or have run away from home. They live in the street; they have not got any support from family and are strongly affected by the street life. Typically they have massive problems with glue sniffing.

Type 2. These children still live with their families. The economical situation of the family is very bad, which means they can not afford education for the children. A lot of the children's parents have got alcohol or drug problems. These children are in the risk zone of becoming type 1 children, but education can be used as prevention against this.

### **Teacher training program**

During our trekking tour around in the new project area of Dialogos I visited two different schools in the VDCs Mukli and Deusa. From talking to Buddhi Shresta, chairman of Young Star Club I understood that teacher training programs are very much needed especially in this area. If the teachers I have experienced are average teachers, I definitely understand the problem. Based on my observations the teachers do teach on much higher level than the actual level of the students. This means that most of the students are lost in the lessons and are not able to answer the teacher's questions; and then he does it himself. One of the teachers tolled me how he always

after he has been reading the English text aloud, translates everything into nepahli. Otherwise the children won't understand anything, he said. Like this the lessons become one man preaches which the children mostly do not understand. This frustrates the children as much as the teachers.

Method:

Gather 10-15 english teachers from different villages and run an intensive program for a week or two.

Purpose:

To give the English teachers more courage to let the students speak, find their actual level, and teach from there. To help them engage the students and make them understand that education can be more fun, using word games or the like.

Worries:

It takes a lot of guts and humour from the volunteers to succeed in such program. The teachers must not feel they are not good enough but learn to see opportunities in their situation. From my point of view it is needed to be done in a balanced humorous way to avoid the teachers from getting insulted.

### **To find the volunteers**

As Sangheeta would like at least two volunteers to come and work at Conscience International Academy as soon as possible, and to get me started now when the memories from Nepal are clear in mind I would like to have the first volunteers going to Nepal in February 2008 already. This however depends on how difficult it is to find the volunteers, which I know can be difficult this close to Christmas. I have made a notice telling about the project, which I will put up in different places in Århus in supermarkets, clubs etc. I have as well sent it to a friend who will put it up in Copenhagen.

On longer terms though, I will make a website too, to reach much more people.

From my stay in South Africa, I am supposed to give a talk at different places, which easily could be used to tell about my new project too. In spring I will contact different high schools in Århus, as graduated high school students typically choose to travel for half a year or so.

### **Preparation of volunteers**

In my application to Dialogos I mentioned a possible co-operation with a folk high school in Denmark. This will not be possible to establish before February though, so I will prepare the first team of volunteers myself using the contacts I have got through the Dialogos Nepal group and from visiting Nepal. Among these I can mention Karin and Ib who have been living in Nepal, a previous danish volunteer at schools in Kathmandu and some Nepalese people living in Denmark.

To arrange the course for the volunteers I have thought about gathering them for a whole week or for some weekends and evenings, depending on from where the volunteers are and how motivated they are.

The course should, from my opinion contain following parts:

- Information about the country
- History

- Political situation
- Culture and religions
  
- Information about the work place(s)
  - What place is it; Mission, persons, difficulties etc.
  - Use “terms of reference” to discuss which expectations the work place and the volunteers have got towards each other. Do they match?
  - Show pictures for the volunteers to get a sense of the atmosphere.
  
- Personal awareness workshops
  - Issues at work
  - What do the volunteers expect from their stay, how to achieve that?
  
- Practical information, before leaving
  - Flight ticket
  - Visa
  - Vaccinations
  - Insurance
  
- Practical information, arriving to Nepal
  - Transport from the airport
  - Where to live
  - Relevant contact details

Most of the program I will be able to run myself, but for the part “information about the country” I would like to find some more qualified talkers. I have asked at a meeting with the Dialogos Nepal group and they sounded optimistic, helping me give the volunteers a proper preparation before going.

What the economy concerns I will work it out as it comes. The first team of volunteers I am willing to prepare voluntarily, and from there I will see how much time and energy it takes. If I am able to handle, I have thought about maybe cancelling the co-operation with a folk high school and continue to send the volunteers myself. What I have found is that I, towards the people I have met in Nepal, want to make sure that everything is done in a proper way. This I can only make sure if I take the responsibility myself. I know the job might be harder than it seems, but this is as well something that I really want to do.

The preparation will be easier, as I go along. I hope to be able to make the volunteers stay in Kathmandu for half a year and fourteen days. Then the “new” and “old” volunteers will stay together for the first/last fourteen days. This will phase in the new volunteers much faster, and in the same time make the change of volunteers easier to deal with for the children. As a part of the deal I will also have the volunteers to help me to prepare the team going half a year after them returning to Denmark. In that way I will have two teams send to Nepal twice a year, prepared by previous volunteers and welcomed in Kathmandu by working volunteers.

As a last part of the preparation, Sangheeta has offered me to arrange a one day workshop for the volunteers when they arrive. This will work as an introduction to the country, the work and environment. She is a really inspiring lady so I am sure it will help to engage the volunteers.

## **Budget for volunteers**

The following is based on my own expenses during my three weeks trip and what Sangheeta has told me she is spending on food every month. It is not very exact, but gives an idea of around how much it is for half a year of basic expenses.

Flight ticket:	10.000 kr	
Insurance:	3000 kr	
Vaccinations:	1000 kr	
Food:	6000 kr	(10.000rps ~ 1000kr/month, 6 months)
Rent:	3000 kr	(5000rps ~ 500kr/month, 6 months)
Transport:	600 kr	(100kr/month, 6 months)
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	23.000 kr	

If the volunteers want to go for trekking this will cost extra, depending on for how long and where they want to go. I have got contact to the small trekking company “Destination Nepal” who can help the volunteers arrange tours in the beginning or end of their stay. I might be able to arrange home stays in the mountains as well where the volunteers will stay and live with the family.

## **Conclusion**

Now, writing the report, setting up notices to find volunteers, telling people about my project I am quite amazed of how much I have suddenly started with my trip to Nepal. I have people in Nepal waiting for me to send this report, finding volunteers and we will be developing co-operations. Between the contacts I have found in Nepal I have also been networking a bit. Rajesh was very interested to hear more about the projects Sangheeta is running, so I gave him her contact details. As well Michala and Nina did meet the Danish embassy in Kathmandu, who has a lot of donor money to support projects working with HIV/Aids, supporting women and underprivileged children. I will send the details to the founder of the Children’s food programme-Nepal, so he can apply for money to support his project. Also from talking to Rajesh about his future plan, starting a place for type 1 street children, I have thought about setting up contact between Rajesh and Jeremy, a street worker I know from Cape Town, to exchange experiences working with street children. In Cape Town the organisation “The Homeless” has succeeded to house street children and send them to school. I thought their knowledge might help Rajesh to succeed in his project.