

Sunrise Children's Association Inc.
"Bringing a brighter future to the needy children of Nepal"



NEWSLETTER
Edition 14,
January 2010

Dear Friends of Sunrise,

We hope 2010 has started off as well for you as it has for Sunrise!

The year started off with some great personal achievements from some of our children, new puppies, a Sunrise picnic and other outings, festivals, various dance and sporting activities, ongoing training programs, another house move, end of year exams, visits from more great volunteers and a trek for the class 8 and 9 boys to name a few.

Our other 3 projects; Kalimati Slums Program, Community Education Scholarship Program and our Community Training and Development Centre have also been going extremely well.

Award winning Sunrise children!

Whilst January was very cold here in Nepal, the Sunrise family certainly warmed our hearts and brightened our days, starting with **14 year old Pema Lama winning The Organisation for Community, Child and Environment Development (OCCED) National Inter-Homes Talent Hunt on January 8th.** Sunrise entered 5 very talented youth into the competition with over 100 other very talented participants. **All 5 of them making the final 15! Participants were Pema Lama, Lasang Lama, Palchhen Lama, Saugat Mainali and Marium Tamang.** After 3 days of 'grooming' and intense competition, the children performed brilliantly in front of a huge crowd of several hundred people, including well known Nepali pop singers and other entertainers who performed during intervals. **Lasang Lama came 1st in the speech competition, Palchhen Lama came 1st in the singing competition and Pema Lama came 1st in not only the dance competition, but the overall competition,** which included speeches and various activities. He was awarded NPR 10,000 as well as many bouquets of flowers. Pema was in high demand from various newspapers and radio stations for the subsequent couple of weeks which was lots of fun for him. Most of the Sunrise family went along to watch, providing tremendous support. Both they and the 5 participants were very excited, and as always the winners were very modest about their fantastic achievements. And we were of course extremely proud!



Above: Pema Lama from Sunrise, winner of The OCCED National Inter-Homes Talent Hunt

Sunrise Puppies

In the same week our much loved dogs Annapurna and Makalu had 6 gorgeous little puppies. As you can imagine with 77 children, they have received a lot of love and attention over the past 3 months and have grown into very happy, playful yet very easygoing puppies. We sadly fare welled our first puppy, Surya, a few weeks ago, but we are delighted that he has gone to live with our very kind local vet who we know will take good care of him.



Above: Mansingh Aideo with one of our Tibetan Mastiff puppies 'Jun' (Moon), 4 weeks, at Sunrise

Sunrise Picnic

The Sunrise family enjoyed another fantastic picnic at a new location in Dulikhel, about an hour out of

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Kathmandu, where we enjoyed a feast prepared by our carers, a hike up 1000 steps to a beautiful look-out and lots of laughs and entertainment with our informal talent show, followed by a couple of hours of dancing.



Above (from top): Ganesh Rokaya, Ganesh Tamang, Niraj Ghimire and Bikal Pun half way up the thousand steps at our Sunrise picnic

Excursion to Boudha Stupa

Some of the boys also enjoyed a day trip to Boudha Stupa, the largest Buddhist Stupa in Nepal. After admiring the thousands of beautifully coloured prayer flags adorning the Stupa, spinning several prayer (mani) wheels and listening to the Tibetan mantra 'om mani padme hum' numerous times (which relates to compassion), we all came away feeling full of peace and joy.



Above: Raja Rana and Repa Tamang enjoying an outing to Boudha Stupa with some of the Sunrise family

Saraswati Puja

Saraswati is the Hindu Goddess of knowledge, education and learning, so is an important festival for students in particular. A Puja (worship) is held in many homes nationwide on the 20th of January, including Sunrise. On this day children are traditionally taught to write their first words, and people pray for her guidance in gaining knowledge and a good education.



Above: Some of the Sunrise children enjoying sweets after receiving a tika during Saraswati Puja

Martyrs Day Dance Performance

The children of Sunrise were asked to perform 3 dances in the local Gokarna Forest at a program put on by the local community in memory of four Nepalese martyrs in particular who "sacrificed their lives with high ideals for fundamental rights of the Nepalese." The four martyrs were Dharma Bhakta Mathema, Dashrath Chand, Gangalal Shrestha, and Shukraraj Shastri, who protested the authoritarian rule of the Rana dictatorship in 1941 and were executed for doing so.



Above: Some of the Sunrise boys getting ready to perform a dance at Gokarna Forest Martyrs Day Program

Shivaratri Festival

This festival celebrates the birthday of Lord Shiva, believed to be creator and destroyer, and hence probably the most important god in Nepal. Devotees, including thousands of hash smoking, bearded, loin cloth wearing sadhus (holi men) flock from all over India and Nepal to Shiva temples, particularly to the great Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu, the largest Hindu temple in Nepal and one of the largest in Asia. The older boys from Sunrise enjoyed an excursion to Pashupatinath to enjoy the festival and the beautiful lights and candles lighting up the temples.

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Above: Pashupatinath Temple where some of the Sunrise children visited during Shivaratri Festival

Holi Festival

Holi, also known as the festival of colours, was celebrated at the end of February, at a time when the weather is starting to get hot and dry. Water is sprayed around liberally, often these days with water balloons, as a reminder that the monsoons will be coming in a couple of months. Coloured powder, particularly red, is also smeared liberally on anyone and everyone that you meet on this day, and there is no saying 'no!' The Sunrise children had lots of fun again this year celebrating together with lots of colour and laughter.



Above: Some of the Sunrise children (Isac, Bipin, Dil Kumar, Bishnu and Saugat) enjoying the coloured dye during Holi Festival

We also celebrated the children's birthday's with another fun **Sunrise birthday party**, and the children participated in various sports and games both at home at school, including an **interschool basketball game**. We didn't do so well in terms of the score, but the children certainly showed their determination and good sportsmanship right through until the last minute. One of the children's favourite pastimes is still **walking our dogs** through our beautiful local countryside, now accompanied by our 6 small puppies. These walks often involve visits to a temple, an adventure in the forest, running races and other fun games together.



Above: Raji, Niruta, Laxmi and Niraj enjoying a dog walk through our beautiful local rice fields

Sunrise Trekking Team hits Langtang!

The inaugural Sunrise trek to the Langtang region kicked off at the end of March, with the 6 boys who just completed year 8 and 9 being our first pioneers; **Saugat Mainali, Lokendra Tamang, Basudev Tamang, Ranjit Rana, Lokjan Rokaya and Pema Lama**). We set off from Sunrise full of enthusiasm and excitement with lots of hugs and good wishes from the rest of the Sunrise children, and trekked for a week, staying at various local village tea houses along the way. We caught a local bus to our starting point, only 4km from our Sunrise home, then trekked through Chisapani, Kutumsang, Thadapati, Phedi, and on day 5 reached the stunning Gosaikunda Lake. We were greeted by a heavy snowfall as we arrived into Gosaikunda, then awoke the next morning to knee deep snow everywhere! We had so much fun building snowmen, having snow fights, sliding down hills, and just sitting, relaxing and enjoying the breathtaking scenery. We then trekked back through beautiful forests to Sing Gompa and Dunche by day 7. It was a great bonding time, and we looked after each other along the way (as a couple of us got sick), sang lots of songs as we walked the narrow, windy paths and shared lots of great conversation and laughter together. A truly memorable experience!



Above: First Sunrise Trekking Team, during our amazing 1 week trek in the Langtang region

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Above: Ranjit Rana and Pema Lama at the stunning Gosaikunda Lake on day 5 of the trek



Above: Lokjan Rokaya and Basudev Tamang with our first big and rather stylish snowman!

End of year Exam Results

As well as enjoying the festivals and various other extra-curricular activities, the children continued to work hard at school and achieve fantastic results. Third term was unfortunately disrupted to some degree by Sunrise having to move house again after only 16 months, due to the landlord wanting to live in the house themselves. This meant we were forced to move into an unfinished house, and faced even more power and water shortages than usual. With their typical positive spirit, the children did their best and rarely complained, still achieving the following great results in their end of year exams at the end of March:

- 3 children; Mansing Aideo, Arati Tamang and Raj Kumar Shrestha came top of their class.
- 12 children came 1st, 2nd or 3rd in their class.
- 32 children came in the top 10 in their class.
- 6 children improved by more than 10% from 1st to 3rd Term: Sunita Tamang, Shreya Magar, Bhasker Bhandari, Ram Chandra Gauchen, Kisan Tamang, Laxmi Rana.

Overall attendance was again outstanding with very few days absent.

Encouragement Awards

We have continued to reward not only the academically successful, but those who strive to excel in the areas of

- Love, respect, care, kindness and service to the Sunrise family members;
- Have a positive attitude and dedication to their education and personal development and;
- Show responsibility and care of themselves and their belongings, including prayer, meditation, personal cleanliness and hygiene etc through our bi-monthly Encouragement Awards.

The most recent awards went to: Dolma Sherpa, Aashish Tamang, Milan Tamang and Deewaki Shrestha.

Volunteers and Sponsor Visits

The first quarter has been busy with 7 delightful volunteers joining us at Sunrise!

Bridget O'Loughlin and daughter Christie joined us in January, followed by **Priya Wakhlu** and sponsor **Emilia Michael** in February. Then in March **Vanessa Lang** joined us for 6 weeks, along with **Ashika Kumar** and sponsor **Nandita Reddy** for 3 weeks.

Bridget and Christie brought a fresh start to the year at Sunrise, bringing their bright happy smiles and enthusiasm to everything they did, from teaching the children some great new games, helping with some sewing repairs, helping with the children's homework and joining in some outings, including the picnic to Duhlikel and the Talent Hunt finals. They even taught a lesson or two at the children's school, teaching them about NZ and singing their national anthem. Before they left they also very kindly took on the sponsorship of one of our bright young girls Susmita, which she was thrilled about!



Above: Bridget and Christie at the picnic in Duhlikel

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Priya came with a bundle of enthusiasm and settled in immediately, her knowledge of Hindi dramatically helping her communication with the carers in particular. She very kindly helped look after our new born puppies as well as being fantastic with the children, helping with their homework, playing various games, teaching them new songs, helping the carers in the kitchen and going on various shopping trips with them and celebrating her 21st birthday with us, which was lots of fun for everyone!

Emilia who sponsors one of the teenage Sunrise boys (and close friend of Priyas) joined shortly after and got straight into the Sunrise routine from day 1, helping the children get ready for school, homework, helping in the kitchen and along with Priya, bought a bundle of energy to the kids games, outings and Sunrise as a whole. Buddhiman was delighted to finally meet his sponsor Emilia after more than 2 years writing to each other. The girls were also extremely patient and understanding about their very basic living conditions, which we greatly appreciated, a temporary shared room at the older of our previous two houses, the only space available during the lengthy house move, with very limited water and power.



Above: Priya (2nd from left) and Emilia (4th from left) with some of the Sunrise boys at Pashupatinath Temple

Vanessa spent 6 weeks with us and endured the entire house move graciously and patiently – a true Nepali experience! Vanessa not only spent a great deal of time helping the children in various ways and got into a regular routine of sweeping and other cleaning jobs around the house which the carers greatly appreciated, she became a very dedicated and much loved English teacher at our Community Training and Development Centre. The students as well as us were sad to see her go and we all appreciated her contributions enormously.



Above: Vanessa saying her final farewells at Sunrise and the Community Training and Development Centre

Last but not least came **Ashika and Nandita!** Nandita, sponsor of one of our 18 year old boys was delighted to finally meet Basudev, as he was her, and they formed a great friendship. Both Ashika and Nandita's Hindi and their incredible energy and enthusiasm enabled them to not only have a great time with the kids, but also with the carers. They put their cooking skills to use and spoilt the carers by cooking them breakfast and even took on the challenge of cooking pasta for ALL the children for one of our Sunrise parties. Their fun and creativity led them to 'dress up' the children with make-up and hair gel on one occasion (even the teenage boys got into the make-up!), and brought the children lots of laughter and joy with their singing and dancing.



Above: Nandita (in white) and Ashika (in pink/grey) with some of the happy Sunrise children

From Bridget and Christie through to Ashika and Nandita, it has been a great few months with you all. Thank you sincerely from all of us at Sunrise for your contributions!

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Sunrise Training and Development Programs

The children continued their **dancing, singing, computing and thanka painting training** at Sunrise, which has led to more performances, public awards and recognition as well as an increase in the personal savings for 17 of the teenage children from the sale of their thanka paintings in Australia.



Above: Some of the Sunrise children during their weekly singing class



Above: One of the children's beautiful Thangka paintings mid-way to completion

We have 5 paintings remaining from 2009 and 17 new ones which will be completed in July, so if anyone is interested in purchasing one please contact emma@scai.org.au.

Rehabilitation Therapy Program

The disabled and otherwise physically impaired children at Sunrise Orphanage continued to receive regular rehabilitation therapy at Sunrise Orphanage, under the guidance of Surendra Bajracharya, qualified physio and rehabilitation therapist. This program has not only benefited them physically, but has given them greater confidence and enthusiasm through their improved mobility and support.

As well as Sunrise Orphanage, SCAI runs 3 other projects along with its local partners;

- **Education of 103 children** from the Kalimati slums
- **Education of 31 children** from local community
- **Training of over 250 students** at Sunrise's Community Training and Development Centre

Kalimati Slums

This project is generously supported by **Paul Cummings and friends from 'Kathmandu Kids' in WA**. The project has various programs including;

- Sponsoring **103** children to attend a good quality, local government school;
- Providing **before and after school tuition** for the class 4-9 students to give them support in doing their homework, as they receive little support if any from their parents/guardians who are generally illiterate;
- Providing classes during the day in the slums classroom for the **3-5 year old children** who do not yet attend school;
- Providing classes during the day for the **lowest caste children** who are not permitted to attend school by their parents, and who prefer their children to help support the family by begging on the streets.

Most of the students up to class 4 did extremely well, with class 5 to 8 still struggling a bit predominantly due to bullying and discrimination at school, as well as a lack of support at home. They too however have improved throughout the year and have all been promoted to the next grade. With a power inverter now in the slums classroom, the before and after school tuition will assist them to a greater degree, and we look forward to seeing them progress further this year.



Above: Some of the children from the Kalimati slums that are benefiting from the Education Scholarship Program

As well as education for these needy children, we opened a new Training and Development Centre

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on 1st April for the parents, offering classes in sewing, candle making and English language. The centre is located in the slums, in a room provided by one of the local families.

In the first week we were delighted that 9 women commended sewing, with 6 registering for English language and 5 for candle making. We are very excited about this new program and look forward to updating you on its progress and new students in the next newsletter.



Above: A group of women attending an information session about the new Training and Development Centre in the Kalimati slums.

Lastly, we were delighted to be able to provide support for one family in the slums to re-build their home (made of bamboo and cardboard) after it burnt down in an accidental fire. For just over \$150 they were able to purchase new blankets and bedding, new school materials for their son and rebuild the bamboo and mud/dung walls.



Above: The Tamang family re-building their home in the Kalimati slums after it burnt down in an accidental fire.

Community Education Scholarship Program

This project, currently supported by **Christian Theisen** from Germany, provides sponsorship of the **education for 31 needy children** from the local community. These children generally have a single mother who does some form of manual labour work earning \$30-50 per month, barely enough to pay the rent of a room and food. In the new school year commencing mid April we are expanding this program to include **50 students**.



Above: Two of the happy children that SCAI sponsors through its Community Education Scholarship Program.

Sunrise Community Training and Development Centre

This project, currently supported by the **Hindmarsh Island Rotary Club**, was established to assist people from within the local community who lack skills, employment and income opportunities. We currently offer **computing, sewing, candle making, English language training and a community library**.

Since its establishment in October 2008, over **270 students** have joined the centre. We plan to continue to expand the centre to incorporate new courses as requested by the local community and train new students in the current courses.



Above: Some of the women at the sewing class at the Sunrise Community Training and Development Centre.

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2010 and beyond

The first quarter has been a great time for Sunrise, with all projects going extremely well. With Nepali new year starting on April 14th, we are confident that projects will continue to evolve and benefit many more needy children and adults.

As mentioned in our December newsletter, where possible we are focusing on developing not only the needy children but on the parents/guardians as well to improve the overall standard of living for the family and increase their chances of independence and self-sufficiency in the future. The first new initiative was the establishment of the **Training Centre in the Kalimati slums.**

For **Sunrise Orphanage**, our major goal for 2010 is to **secure land and start building Sunrise Children's Village.** This has gotten off to a good start with significant progress made with one Local Village Development Committees in particular, in being granted land free from the government.

Sunrise Children's Village

SCV will be a purpose built, energy efficient, semi-self sustainable, permanent home for the current and future children of Sunrise Orphanage. We plan to house up to 100 children at a time, with the following facilities that both the Sunrise children and the local community can benefit from:

- Training and development centre for computing, sewing/tailoring, thanka painting and other saleable goods
- Library and English language centre
- Music centre for singing, dance, music, performances
- Rehabilitation centre for disabled, including health post with basic medical facilities
- Multi-purpose sports field for soccer, volleyball, badminton, basketball, table tennis etc
- Playground with swing, slippery dip, seesaw and various climbing equipment
- Courtyard/ garden for reading, studying, yoga, meditation, talking
- Vegetable/ herb garden for consumption by Sunrise
- Animal grazing and breeding

Please contact emma@scai.org.au for further information on any of our current projects.

If anyone is interested in supporting Sunrise, you may do so by becoming a monthly donor, donating materials or providing one off financial assistance with any of the following:

- Educational materials
- Medical supplies
- Clothing/Personal items
- Recreational items (sporting, toys)
- Training Programs (sewing, computing, music, dance, singing, thanka painting)
- Household
- Vehicles (bus and minivan)

Please see website or contact emma@scai.org.au for more details. We greatly appreciate any support you may be able to offer.

We hope you have enjoyed reading about our activities and achievements over the last quarter and would like to sincerely thank all sponsors, donors, volunteers, visitors and our Sunrise teams in both Australia and Nepal. It is with your generous assistance and warm support that we are able to work together with our wonderful partners in Nepal to improve the lives of so many needy people.

Best wishes,
Emma and the Sunrise Family

