



## HAUS DER HOFFNUNG - HILFE FÜR NEPAL e.V.

Spenden zugunsten des Vereins werden von deutschen Finanzbehörden als mildtätig und gemeinnützig anerkannt (VR 701024).

www.hausderhoffnung-nepal.de; www.facebook.com/HausderHoffnung; Instagram: @selfhelpnepal

Vorsitzende: Ellen Dietrich, Kurt-Schumacher-Str. 241, 73529 Schwäbisch Gmünd, Tel. 07171-89607

E-Mail: info@hausderhoffnung-nepal.de

Schriftführerin: Ingrid Schneider-Winter, Fritz-Fischer-Str. 7, 79379 Müllheim, Tel. 07631-170793

Schatzmeister: Walter Neumann, Balingen Str. 15, 71636 Ludwigsburg, Tel. 07141-460620

Kreissparkasse Ostalb, IBAN: DE 44 6145 0050 1000 0511 51, BIC: OASPDE6A

Winter 2021

### Newsletter No. 48

Dear friends,

When the number of COVID cases in Nepal dropped drastically in late summer and the 14-day quarantine for travelers was lifted, I decided to visit the children again after 1½ years absence. I landed in Kathmandu in the middle of the children's exam sessions at the end of their 1st quarter and just before the biggest Hindu festival, Dashain. The joy of reunion was enormous on both sides. Because of the pandemic last year, the children had to stay with us during the festivals and vacation. This year, however, they were once again allowed to travel to their villages or to their relatives in Kathmandu for around 12 days. Most of the children were actually picked up. However, this whole process of picking them up dragged on for over a week, and in most cases we did not know exactly when the relatives would arrive. Out of sheer anticipation and in order to be able to leave immediately, the 10-year-old boy Birendra was already walking around with a backpack and baseball cap two days before the big moment arrived. We were able to compensate for the understandable disappointment of about 20 children who had to stay with us by having a nice party in our home with the typical roasted goat as well as excursions to a small amusement park and a swimming pool. These children could not go home because the roads in their district were impassable due to landslides caused by the violent monsoons or because there was a death in the family. In such cases, families are not allowed to celebrate for a year; However, the children could do this with us and so they were better off with us. Unfortunately, there are also a few children whose relatives show no interest in them.



As much as the children were looking forward to being at home, they were happy to come back to us - except for a few of them. They value their second home very much. After all, it wouldn't be good if they didn't like returning to their roots and seeing their father, mother or other relatives again. During this short vacation, they receive much more attention than we can ever give them with our large group of children and our daily routine. We also have to challenge and encourage them in school, which is not the case during the holidays. And most of those who would have liked to remain at home, find it more difficult to learn. After consulting with their relatives, all the children stay with us - also out of their own conviction - because the families cannot afford either financially or from an educational point of view to have them at home. Most of them are illiterate and want their child to get ahead. We are aware of the children's ambivalence. Fortunately, we have been able to solve this problem because all the children are very cheerful again and are eagerly preparing for the Tihar festival (Festival of Lights) with its activities.



Despite the pandemic, the former interns Mathis and Eric dared to travel unvaccinated to Nepal for distance learning in March 2021. At that time, everything seemed to be going well again in Nepal, almost everything was open and the COVID case numbers were low. Mathis reports:

*"Unfortunately, the good situation in Nepal did not last long. The Delta variant came across the border from India in mid-April and spread so quickly that there was another total lockdown. In our homes, all possible measures were taken to prevent infections. But even though almost all employees had*

*moved into our houses and those who came from outside were only moving between their apartments and our houses, the first employees and children tested positive for COVID at the end of May. Since the cases had been undetected in the house for a while, it came as it had to come: almost all children and employees in two of our houses were COVID positive in the following weeks, and only the house with the oldest children was spared except for one positive case.*

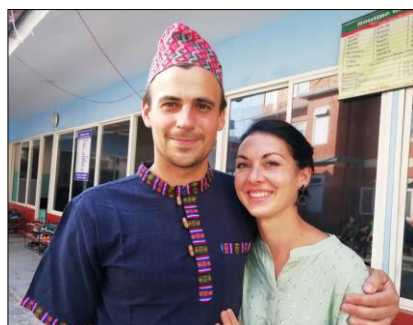
*At that time, all hospitals in Kathmandu were overloaded and oxygen reserves were very scarce. There was nothing left for us to do but hope that everyone would survive the infection unharmed. For me as a German citizen, this was a very unusual situation, as we are used to the fact that there is always a solution to problems. Being at the mercy of the situation and having to hope that nothing would happen was something I had never experienced before. But fortunately, all those infected survived their infections without any serious outcomes. The fact that in the end nothing happened to all of us and that there were no severe cases was a stroke of luck with more than 100 positive cases.*

*After the infections in the house had been overcome, we all had the certainty for the time being that we had a certain immunity to the virus. At the same time, the situation in the entire country was improving - albeit very slowly at first. During this critical time, the association continued to give away food, support an isolation ward or provide personal COVID assistance."*

Because of COVID-19, the start of the school year was postponed from April until July - with online classes. Since we would have needed too many laptops for our children from grades 1-10, we decided to teach the children in three blocks of two hours each day using the textbooks with our own teachers and with the help of our young people in grades 11 and higher. I myself taught grades 7-10 in English and Eric was able to help the older children in science and math. So we complemented each other well in our skills. Since there was no commute to school, there was more free time for the children than normal. So, every week we presented a country and organized a quiz for the older children in order to strengthen their general knowledge and to enable them to think outside of the box.

Since September, the children have been able to attend school again, and everyday life has returned to some extent. Looking back, the time during the lockdown was not an easy one. However, Eric and I have very positive feelings about this time for our children because compared to other children in Nepal, we were able to give them proper lessons so that their education did not suffer under these circumstances. In addition, they were not isolated from children in their same age group, but got through this time together and coped as a community.

Fortunately, more vaccine is coming into Nepal, so our older children and all of the staff have already been vaccinated once. I hope that the increasing vaccination rate will prevent another lockdown and an overloading of the health system in the future, so that the association, together with new interns from Germany, can properly get back to its daily routine."



Our first interns after the lockdown were Sina and Jaron, a married couple from Hamburg, who actually wanted to do a longer internship at the House of Hope last year. Unfortunately, the situation did not allow it at that time. When the situation changed surprisingly fast with the lifting of the travel restrictions, the two decided on very short notice to come to Nepal for four weeks - at the best time to travel and between the biggest festivals Dashain and Tihar. Here are a few of their impressions:

"Shortly after arriving in Nepal, we were literally thrown into the deep end or as the Germans say into cold water, i.e the cold waters of "Whoopee Land", an amusement park with crazy slides and fun amusement attractions on the west side of Kathmandu. This trip was part of the vacation program for all the children who could not go to their villages during the Dashain festival. This made it much easier for us to get to know the culture, the country and especially the children and the care-givers and we immediately became part of the "Self-Help Nepal extended family": as aunty & uncle, as sister & brother or simply as Sina & Jaron. The staff and supervisors made a lot of effort to make the children's vacation fun but also informative.



In the following days, our program with the children and young people included a trip to the aviation museum near the airport where the children were able to climb into an aircraft on display and were given information about aviation in a clear and vivid way. Let's see how many Self-Help Nepal children become pilots in the future. You could tell how much the children enjoyed these trips after almost 1½ years of barely being allowed to leave their homes.

After our first week, the school routine returned and the younger children (up to 10<sup>th</sup> grade) had a demanding daily schedule ahead of them. This gave us the opportunity to get to know the older children or teenagers, as they will not return to school until after the second major festival - Tihar, the Festival of Lights. In addition to a few trips together to Kathmandu's sightseeing hotspots, we were also athletically challenged by playing soccer and basketball. It was good to know that we could still keep up despite a "small" age difference of 10 to 15 years... The evenings were well filled with general knowledge quizzes, some of which we helped to create and we learned a lot ourselves. To give the children an insight into our former studies and present working day in Germany, we also gave a presentation about our profession as civil engineers.



As a contrast to the daily Dal Bhat, we prepared pancakes with apple sauce and Swabian cheese spaetzle with fried onions together with the "big and small cooks". This was a big favorite of the young people who had already spent a school year in Germany (see Newsletter No. 43 and 46). However, nothing will be able to beat Dal Bhat anytime soon no matter how hard we tried...



Globalization does not stop at Nepal. Thanks to the Internet, some children are familiar with Halloween. One week before Tihar, we dedicated a whole day to pumpkins, ghosts and other spooky creatures: we carved pumpkins, roasted pumpkin seeds, made up faces, made Halloween memory games and sang in front of the illuminated pumpkins in the dark.

The last two years have been filled with changed plans and improvisations for all of us. The fact that we were able to get to know this



*great and beautiful country with its open, warm-hearted and loving people was/is one of the best experiences for us. The insights into the everyday life of the children or the possibility to shape it and to see how much the children are happy about little things is totally enriching and simply beautiful. We are very grateful that we could be here and participate in the life of the children's home. For us, this was definitely one of the best changes in our plans this year!"*



Our former leader Navaraj became the father of a daughter, and he had always wanted a daughter as his first child. This does not correspond at all to Nepalese family planning. Girls marry and then belong to their husband's family as a labor force and to provide for their old age, while boys take care of their families of origin. We congratulate them from the bottom of our hearts and wish the young family all the best for their future.

Meshak studied medicine in China because it was cheaper there than in Nepal, and the association covered the costs. There were also significantly more places to study there than in his home country, because China specifically recruited students

from abroad. For a few years, he practiced with his bachelor's degree in remote areas in Nepal. Now he has successfully completed his residency as a general practitioner and is heading to an even more remote area, namely the Salyan district in the northeast. The journey from Kathmandu takes around 24 hours by public bus. Six days a week, he is supposed to be on duty 24 hours a day. Doctors are very thin on the ground there. This places a great responsibility on him, combined with a great deal of loneliness because the Internet is not yet a given there.



In contrast to Germany, Nepal has not yet reported any worrisome rise in the number of cases for COVID, which is probably related to its younger population. Hopefully the tourists who returned to the country in October and November won't trigger a new wave of COVID-19. Our young people and our staff could meet on Nov. 11. vaccinated for the second time.

If you live in the U.S. and want to support this organization, you can do so by sending a check to the following American organization that is kind enough to transfer your contribution to our account in Nepal and to issue a tax refund slip to you.

Nepal Hope 38112 Young Drive, Fremont, CA 94536

You can also make a contribution by using their web page [www.nepalhope.org](http://www.nepalhope.org). Please, in both cases, specify our organization by stating "for SHN." "SHN" stands for Self Help Nepal, the name of our organization in Nepal.

We thank you all for your support and wish you all the best for the holidays and the New Year in these still very difficult times. Please remain loyal to us. We still need you urgently.

With kind regards,

*Ellen Dietrich*

