

Nepal – Amar Jyoti School

October 2010 - from our local partners at Tiger Mountain



Situated about 200km west of Kathmandu, this school has set itself apart from the run of government secondary schools. With a dynamic guardians' committee (akin to parent governors in UK schools), the school is determined to provide a quality education that takes on the local private schools. Key to this is the need to convert to English medium teaching. Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, winner of several awards for its work developing the concept of responsible conservation tourism and located close to the school, has been providing capital support for the

development of the school's classrooms. As the lodge's representative on the guardians' committee, Sanu Adhikari, said, "What is a classroom if the teaching is not up to standard?" Hence an e-mail or four to Sallie and Kate at People & Places to give form to the idea of supporting the school's teachers through volunteers working to increase their confidence in using English for teaching.

Valerie Kemp and Margaret Wolstenholme arrive in early September during the latter part of a late and heavy monsoon. Nothing daunted, they walked daily to the school, some 3 miles away by road, to act as our pathfinder team. I think we all had some concerns at the school taking on such a big task – conversion to English medium – and how the volunteers would be able to contribute effectively to the process of conversion. Well, these two pioneers dispelled the nebulous worries and put the substantive issues into a sensible perspective. Their sense of humour, energy, confidence, and enthusiasm won over everyone – teachers, community, and pupils alike. A month in post flew by as the weather gave way to the glorious post-monsoon summer. Valerie (also known by the science led senior staff as Calorie!) and Mar Gar Et, as the small children decided it should be said, put in hours of lesson planning (an entirely novel concept to Nepali government schools where "chalk and talk" prevails!), teaching aids, posters, interactive teaching style demonstrations and a whole lot more.



The conclusion of their tenure coincided with the end of term, prior to the great annual Dasain Festival (celebrating the triumph of the goddess Durga over the demons).



The send off prepared by the school was a tribute to the volunteers with flower garlands, bouquets, a letter of thanks and gifts. Of course, such an event could not happen without obligatory speeches – which were mercifully short and full of praise for what had been achieved!

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There is no doubt that Margaret and Valerie have, in a short month, laid solid foundations for the ongoing programme of volunteers at Amar Jyoti School. We all look forward to the arrival of Paddy and Julie to take the project forward.

Finally, an enormous thank you to Sallie and Kate who work so hard, and with such total commitment, to ensure that projects and volunteers alike derive genuine benefit, great pleasure, and achieve great challenges.



Days in the life volunteers at Amar Jyoti School – with Mr. Netra Thapa, Chairman of the Guardians' Committee at the Farewell Assembly; striking the school bell (an object of fascination for both volunteers!); Margaret and Damodar Sapkota, Headmaster, at the Prize Giving for the Computer Knowledge Quiz; Classroom work in the primary section with Valerie.