

Helambu Education and Livelihood Partnership (HELP)

Enabling children to explore and grow!

REPORT ON VOLUNTEERS RECEIVED BETWEEN JUNE 2016-OCTOBER 2016

Introduction

HELP (Helambu Education and Livelihood Partnership) has been receiving volunteers since 2010. At its inception HELP started with five international volunteers and reached a record of 61 volunteers in 2014. They were from 15 different countries and worked at 16 different schools. Most of them were from Cambridge University.

In 2015, we decided not to accept any new volunteers because of the massive earthquake that had hit Sindhupalchowk district a few months earlier, severely altering the lives of people in our base activity area. There were constant aftershocks, roadblocks, landslides and needless to say many homes were destroyed in the disaster. Five previous volunteers- Kim Sorenson, Ada Humphrey, Charlotte Chorley, Tim and Ella Campbell decided to return to Nepal and visit the schools where they had volunteered before. They saw the decimated streets and destroyed houses. They were moved by the condition of the villages and the villagers and as such decided to further provide support to the communities.

As 2016 runs, we feel fortunate to have received over 30 volunteers by this date while we're still expecting scores of volunteers in the months to come. While some applied independently, most of our volunteers were from Cambridge University and Oxford University. Prior to that, we also received volunteers from Loughborough University in March.





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Table of Schools

S.No:	Name and Address of Schools	No. of Int'l Volunteers
1.	Shree Taltuleshwory Primary School, Kotgaun, Thangpalkot	2
2.	Shree Bhotangdevi Secondary School, Bhotang	2
3.	Shree Deurali Primary School, Tartong, Helambu	2
4.	Shree Pemachholing Lower Secondary School, Nakote, Helambu	3+1
5.	Shree Nurbuling Manichaur Secondary School, Kharkadanda, Kiul	4
6.	Shree Jaleshwory Lower Secondary School, Jaisigaun, Bhotechaur	3
7.	Shree Bhotenamlang Secondary School, Bhotenamlang	2
8.	Shree Satdhara Lower Secondary School, Birkharka, Kiul	2
9.	Shree Risankhumani Primary School, Dhudeni, Kiul	2
10.	Shree Kieulethana Lower Secondary School, Gufa, Melamchi-14	2
11.	Shree Narayan Lower Secondary School, Ichowk, Ichowk	3
12.	Shree Satkanyamati Secondary School, Mamsang, Gunsang-8	2
	Total	30

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Detailed information about the volunteers

The volunteers that we recently received have taught between 1200-1300 students directly. Most of them are at primary level or lower secondary level volunteers were taught English, Science and Math. Their teaching skills were really influential and made easy to understand gradually and the way of teaching was full of fun filled, game oriented, fresh ideas to the schools and sharing cultural aspects to each other was really effective and motivates to learn more about world. Some of the information on volunteers and their contribution are as follows:

1. Eleanor Field

Eleanor Field, our first volunteer from the OU/CU June-October batch is from United Kingdom She arrived here on 5th June 2016 and stayed in the capital for two nights. She visited HELPP office on the day following her arrival where she was briefed about her placement area, school and a few Dos and Donts. She went for a short sightseeing around Kathmandy including a few UNESCO heritage sites before leaving for her placement. On 7th she left for Shree Taltuleshwory Primary School, Thangpalkot VDC. She started teaching from 8th June to 29th June 2016 where she basically took English classes. The teachers and students at Taltuleshwary fondly remember her

Ellie wanted to make an impact on the lives of the students in Nepal while exchanging cultural values with the children. As it was her gap year, she wanted to try something new and put her skill to good use which she definitely did. Ellie said she was touched by the community and the school and she believes with the engagement of more volunteers, the quality of education at the school can definitely change as the teachers there are supportive and the students receptive.



2. Hannah Williams and Lizzy Mansfield

Hannah and Lizzy were both from Oxford University and arrived here in Nepal on 20th June 2016. They left for their placement after two days of sightseeing in Kathmandu Valley.



They were placed at Bhotangdevi Secondary School, Bhotang. They were at Bhotang until July 2 where they got to experience how the lives of people changed after earthquake. They both taught English and Grammar from primary level to secondary level and sometimes English songs and rhymes etc.

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According to them, initially it was really tough to teach the children to get their message across due to the language barrier but later it went well as the children were disciplined, curious, enthusiastic and excited to learn English and gradually they noticed some improvement and eagerness on the students' part to learn new things. They say it was a fun experience teaching these kids. Although they were there for a short period, they shared a very good relation with the host family and they had no issues with the food, in fact, they say they liked it. They mentioned that they never felt tired making that half an hour walk to school and back because of the loving and caring nature of the host and the community. They were really touched by the friendly nature of the people there. Finally they think that the children and the people in village really value education. She also lauds the three 'Teach for Nepal' fellows who have worked really hard to make improvements and seem to have made really positive difference since the massive earthquake. They suggest that length of the volunteering programme must be a little longer to make a larger impact on the quality of education in the schools.

3. Luke Martin

Luke Martin is from Belfast in Northern Ireland and now lives in Oxford, currently doing PhD in Philosophical Theology at the University. Luke works as the Junior Dean at Keble College, Oxford. He arrived in Kathmandu on 20 June 2016. He was here with six others volunteers who were also from same University. He left for his placement school on 22nd June 2016. He was placed at Shree Taltuleshwory Primary School where Eleanor Field was already volunteering, nearing the end of her traineeship. Like Lizzy and Hannah, he too was here for a short time. He was expecting to teach English at the secondary level but since his school was a primary one, he settled with it. He found school was well run, teachers out there were friendly and the host family was really respectful, welcoming and kind. He liked the surrounding villages and was fascinated by the views of mountains out there which he had never seen before. He taught the children with method followed in the UK. He suggested that we need to add more precise and accurate information on our School Fact Files for e.g. How far is the school from Kathmandu? How long is the trek to village? How many English speakers in the village? What is the accommodation like? Share room or have room to yourself? Will there be phone network? Luke recommended that we should recommend volunteers to spend 3-4 days in Kathmandu. He noted that a major problem at school is toilets facilities for the children. Teach and Trek was really well experience as the trek to Pun hill was mesmerizing and view of the surrounding areas was amazing, according to Luke. It was a worthwhile experience for him.

4. Alessandra Martorana and Olivia Bertram

Alessandra and Olivia from Oxford University arrived on 20th June 2016. They were in the same group with Luke Martin, Hannah Williams, Emily Ostridge and Evangeline Towersey. They spent two days in Kathmandu



enjoying sightseeing around UNESCO recognized World heritage sites Like Boudhanath Stupa, The monkey Temple(Swoyambhunath), Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square and Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu and Patan. . They were placed at Shree Deurali Primary School at Tartong in Helambu Village.

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They were here to experience and observe the lives and culture of the people in the village and to contribute in enhancing the level of education of the children.

They both taught English to the students which seemed really difficult and tough initially as the teachers and children out there were very weak in English and it became really difficult to communicate. The teachers, community people and children were found to be respectful towards them. They were at the school for a short period but they gathered many memorable experiences at the place and they also had a host of solutions that was really helpful. They found that there was a problem in terms of punctuality with the teachers and they also faced issues with conducting the classes in private as there was continued distraction from other classes. They found that the teachers and students lacked ambitiousness owing to which they feel their work wasn't as effective as they actually wished it to be.



A very good suggestion they made was to make a bigger impact on the quality education, the teachers could be sent to comprehensive training courses to improve their language skills which would also in turn benefit the students. They suggested that HELPP office should include more accurate and more specific information about the accommodation arrangements and also about the school to the volunteers beforehand. This would prepare the volunteers in advance for the risks and challenges they could possibly face in future.

5. **Emily Ostridge and Evangeline Towersey**

Emily Ostridge and Evangeline Towersey arrived on the same date as did Luke Martin, Lizzy Mansfield, Hannah Williams, Alessandra Martorana and Olivia Bertram, on 20 June 2016.



They were placed at Shree Pemachholing Lower Secondary School, Nakote in Helambu where they reached on June 22 and stayed till July 3. Their main objective to be in Nepal was to try and help people in the village and school hit hard by April 2015 earthquake. According to them, the level of comprehension of the English language was very poor at the school whereas the textbooks themselves were inaccurate. The teachers lacked commitment and the students barely understood English which made their understanding of the textbook contents very limited. They were also of the opinion that HELPP should provide more information particularly about the walk to the placement centres and stay more in contact with the volunteers throughout the placement.

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6. Keri Stroud and Megan Armishaw

Keri Stroud and Megan Armishaw arrived here on 20 June 2016. Before heading for their traineeship at Shree Nurbuling Manichaur Secondary School, they spent two days in the capital sightseeing and relaxing- in a bid to acclimatise. The duo headed to Nurbuling School at Kharkadanda in Kiul Village on 22 June on a jeep and hiked uphill for three hours.. They were at school from 22 June to 11 July.

According to Keri and Megan, since they enjoy teaching children back at home they thought it would be worthwhile to teach children at a country where their contribution could make a difference and their efforts would be appreciated. They taught English lessons from grade one to grade six. They enjoyed the food prepared by the 'aunty' at the hostel who also cooks food for the children. It was a bit awkward for them initially to share room with the girls as there was no privacy, but they eventually got used to it. They found the children were so to be curious, enthusiastic and they had the desire to learn, also the entire teachers were so friendly which made teaching so much fun for them. Megan and Keri were also able to learn cultural dances, songs and some Nepali words by the end of their stay. Their expectations were met and it was not very difficult to communicate with the students as their English was fairly well.

Suggestions: Teachers need to be serious about attending school because their frequent absence hampers children's education. HELPP must update information pack so as to give an accurate picture of the schools to the volunteers which must be sent to them well in advance.

7. Ella Irwin, Patricia Rus and Kieran Toms

Kieran Toms studies medicine at Christ College in University of Cambridge. Patricia Rus is actually from Romania and studies Land Economy at St. John's College in University of Cambridge. Ella Irwin is from Cambridge and studies politics at University of Cambridge. They arrived in Kathmandu on 24 June 2016. They volunteered at Shree Jaleshwory Lower Secondary School, Jaisigaun at Bhotechaur Village where they taught for nearly four weeks at the school before leaving for Annapurna trek. Jaleshwory received them on 26 June. They stayed at the principal's house which was a small temporary hut because most of the village houses were brought down by the earthquake. According to them, they wanted to help the children, to develop their own skills and test themselves in a completely new environment and to give the children a better level of English and to experience a different. They started teaching from class one to class eight individually. It was a bit challenging in the beginning as the children were shy and didn't show much creativity. Gradually the children started getting confident and showing their creativity and after a week it went well and improved the confidence where the children were able to speak, write English, able to write their own sentences.

The host family was really generous, caring and hospitable. They were served good food and taken to visit surrounding hills, tea garden, cave (which is really famous out there.) After completing their volunteering time, they went trekking to Annapurna with two other volunteers who were placed at Shree Bhotenamlang Secondary School, Bhotenamlang. They mentioned they had an incredible time out there at the foothills of the mountains. Overall they were able to collect lot of memories regarding trek and teach.

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Suggestions: Teachers should encourage the children to write, make them practice a lot, stress on more interactive activities, such as games or getting students up to the front to speak. HELPP should forward details of the placement sooner for flight bookings and vaccinations etc and even the placement of the volunteers for a longer period would be more helpful for the students.

8. Aran Jai Singh Tawana and Anna Myers

Aran and Anna arrived in Kathmandu on 19 July and stayed in Kathmandu for two days before leaving for trekking with three other volunteers. After finishing their trekking, they headed towards their placement school- Shree Bhotenamlang Secondary School in Bhotenamlang Village. They started volunteering as temporary teachers from August which lasted till August 15. They wanted to volunteer in the village school to inspire the children to strive for a future outside their village (give them an insight to the rest of the world and show them that there is more than just Bhotenamlang and make them realize the possibilities that await them with a good education. They taught English lessons in pairs. The main problem they faced was with translation as there was not a single teacher who could convey the children what they wanted to say. Living conditions were good (except for the stench of oil from the canisters in the room and the smoke from the grandma's fire next door) . There was a lack of organization at school and the teachers seemed to treat them as an inconvenience at times. Public holidays and holidays taken by teachers were not communicated to them in advance which meant they incurred an additional significant cost to rearrange flights.



Suggestions: HELPP should better communicate with partner schools, intervene and advise on vital parts of their education. For example Syllabus, teaching style etc. School must have an organized timetable for the volunteers so that they can make a larger impact on the children. Even HELPP should have its own facebook page with pictures from the past experiences and information being posted to improve the volunteering program. Overall experience was a breath taking experience to see such a different way of life, surrounded by spectacular scenery and with such happy children.

9. Alicia Cooke and Emma Rahman

Alicia and Emma arrived here in Kathmandu on 29 July 2016 and they left for their placement at Shree Satdhara Lower Secondary School in Birkharka on 1st August

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They taught English from Grade one to six in pair. It was really difficult to teach to the children initially as they didn't understand but they gradually made progress due to their keenness to learn. The students who were shy initially gradually started to open up. They also found the people of the community very friendly and warm and the hosts were very caring and helpful. Alicia and Emma even said the food was delicious. The two took some time off to visit the areas nearby and also encountered a local festival called Janai Purnima where lots of shamans were in their cultural dresses wearing bells necklace and chanting mantras and playing drums.



Suggestions: The classrooms at School are really fine and newly constructed but the number of teachers looks inadequate. As the classes are from ECD to Class six, they have only four teachers including the head master which means if anyone got to get sick, the classes remain empty. Team work was found to be lacking at the school and also the teachers should not rely so heavily on the text books and be more interactive. For improving the volunteering program through HELPP, the organisation should give specific information about placement earlier so flights don't get very expensive and effective current information about the placement area must be updated beforehand.

10. Jessica Flavell and Cloran Ryan



Jessica and Cloran arrived in Kathmandu on August 2 2016. They volunteered at Shree Risankhumani Basic School in Dhudeni. They wanted to see how the village was affected by the earthquake and to help a struggling community and share their love of education and teach children to make a difference. . They taught for nearly three and half weeks at the school where they taught from class one to six in a pair. Like others, they too encountered some problems during the initial phase due to communication issues. They encouraged the teachers to work with them for half an hour after school to practice English, to discuss about their daily teaching's impact and the methods of teaching. They faced many challenges including their accommodation at the temporary tinned house which had no proper surrounding. It was difficult to sleep in the shelter. They quite enjoyed the food, went around the village and once even dropped by at Satdhara School to say hello to the volunteers placed there. The duo also had the experience of observing Janai Purnima with the locals.

11. Maggie Belcher and Jessica Shea

Maggie Belcher and Jessica Shea arrived in Kathmandu on August 1 before leaving for their placement at Shree Nurbuling Manichaur Secondary School, Kharkadanda two days later.



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They were actually inspired to fly down to Nepal and volunteer after hearing the news of 2015 earthquake and help in whatever way they could. They also wanted to trek around Mount Everest.

They went to the placement school on 3rd of August to until 26th August 2016. At the school where they stayed till August 26 for their traineeship where the duo taught students from class one to class six. Teaching was quite challenging at first due to communication issues but it gradually became fine and they started feeling special once the students started to understand them and respond to them. They were impressed with how the students were curious and frequently asked questions about UK and their education.

Maggie and Jessica say that their expectations have been met, as the teachers were so welcoming and supportive at the school, particularly Sam who made sure that they were well taken care of and helping them with teaching the children. They were under the impression that they would stay with a host family but in fact has to stay at the boarding facility with the girls which was initially quite challenging due to lack of privacy. They feel HELP should have informed them in advance regarding the accommodation arrangements so it was a little disappointing initially but they eventually managed. . Their comment, "The school should keep doing what they are doing. If possible, try to recruit a few more teachers because we often felt that many classes were just left to their own devices. Try to focus or add sport to curriculum as the students really love it."

"We loved the fact that HELP is a localized charity, focused on helping community schools in the Helambu region which feel us that our time spent in Nurbuling had a significant impact and that the raised money will directly benefit the school, because of HELP's close connections with Nurbuling and the surrounding region."

Suggestion: Only one thing, HELP must have a clear idea of the conditions in each school before informing and sending volunteers, so that volunteers can be more prepared accordingly beforehand.

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