

Dear All,

We are pleased to present you the third SAI Help Nepal Newsletter. Many of us came to Kathmandu during autumn to visit our projects on the ground. We faced stories of sadness, separation, and sorrow and at the same time experienced people's resilience, joy, and hope. Seven months after the earthquake, tens of thousands of families are still displaced and live in tents or temporary shelters. Although much of the debris has been removed from public spaces, many residential, commercial, and government buildings, schools, and hospitals still bear signs of the event. Reconstruction lacks speed and attention, as well as financial investment. The government is only slowly responding to the need to unlock the funds international donors have pledged. It formed a National Reconstruction Authority in the immediate aftermath of the devastation but dissolved it due to discrepancies and the wrangling of political parties and factions. This newsletter, however, is evidence that life in Nepal goes on. Despite the despair, people have shown a remarkable sense of (re)construction and adaptability. SAI Help Nepal remains committed to supporting humanitarian relief work, the rebuilding activities, and programs to overcome the traumatic experience of the earthquake.

On-going and new projects

We continue to help those projects we believe bring change in the lives of the genuinely earthquake-affected communities. Many of us have longstanding ties to people and places resulting from our ongoing research in the country. We support projects on the basis of these relationships. Our coordinators on the ground provide us with regular reports and updates, and they share their successes and failures with us. In this way, we monitor the outcome of each project so as to achieve a high degree of assurance that your donations are being put to good use. We are engaged in both long- and short-term projects; these are initiatives that tend to direct their help towards children and the elderly, women, and the underprivileged. We support the rebuilding of homes, schools, and such religiously significant sites as temples and monastic institutions, which are often important markers of identity in Nepal. Knowing the importance of belonging and place, of a sense of home, we also engage in community-building programs. Our projects are located in different geographical regions and range from inside urban Kathmandu to remote Himalayan borderlands.



A knitted self-portrait of an earthquake affected woman in Thulo Byasi.



Helping children to overcome their trauma is one of ArTree's many activities.

Following our initial support in May, a second donation has been provided to **Future Hope Nepal Children's Home** in September. Rajan Khatiwoda from Heidelberg visited the orphanage, which is located in the Gothatar neighborhood of Kathmandu. He met with Rita Sivakoti, the head of the institution. She maintained that the donation reached the orphanage's twenty children at a time when they were in great need. The funds were used for medical checkups and necessary treatments, as well as for study materials and play tools. In addition, such daily necessities as food and clothes were purchased.



Nayak Pariyar recalls the earthquake at Hope Hermitage.

Hope Hermitage Nepal is in the focus of our **Relief for Elderly Earthquake Victims**, a project that Roberta Mandoki is the patron of. The earthquake response program of Hope Hermitage is directed to those elderly people who, after being evacuated by helicopter from the affected districts, had to undergo major treatment at hospitals in the capital city without sufficient support from relatives. Upon being discharged from hospital, the elderly were temporarily offered refuge by Hope Hermitage, which provides them with shelter, nursing care, and psycho-social support. As a second step, Hope Hermitage supports its residents by reuniting them with family members. Our contribution has provided urgently needed food and medicine to the community. Visit our website for an account of Nayak Pariyar's life, a 75-year-old man from Sindupalchowk, one of the regions worst affected by the earthquake.

Christiane Brosius contributed to Photo Kathmandu, the first international photography festival of Nepal, with the exhibition "**Patis in Patan: Nodal Points of In/Tangible Urban Heritage in Urban Nepal.**" The project was conducted with local researchers Dikshya Kari and Rajendra Shakya as well as the artist/curator Sujan Chitrakar. It highlighted the *patis*, a unique—and yet often overlooked—spatial and social 'institution' of the Kathmandu Valley. In post-earthquake Nepal, *patis* have proven their significance as shelters, safe meeting spaces or store-rooms for materials secured from collapsed buildings. They are not just vernacular sites of intangible and tangible heritage, but also supportive institutions, especially for less 'visible' and more vulnerable groups like the elderly, women, children, or homeless people—for whom they are a much-needed island of temporary relief and solidarity.



The Tamrakar Pati (with photographs of the recovered music items).



Bhajan-musicians from the Maharjan Pati.



Songbook and music instruments found in the debris.



Artwork of Rakesh Yakami at the exhibition in Thulo Byasi.

ArTree, a Kathmandu-based artist collective, continues to actively engage in post-earthquake community projects involving mostly work with children and women. Some members of our SAI Help Nepal team went to Bhaktapur to visit the collective's latest project, called **12 Baisakh**, the Nepali date when the first earthquake struck. In the neighborhood of Thulo Byasi, ArTree created a community-focused platform where artists and other professionals could contribute towards the creation of artworks and craftsmanship with local community members in localities which were severely damaged by the earthquake. The portrayal of people's individual perspectives, histories, and needs were of great significance. Experiences ranged from dealing with traumatic memories of loss and fear to economic and social conflicts, and the role of culture and religion in regeneration and reconstruction processes. The initiative, of which

Christiane Brosius is the patron, came to a hold because of the Indian blockade (e.g. withholding petrol and gas from entering Nepal, leading to a major breakdown of public and private life), but aims at continuing work as soon as the conditions improve.

Rebuilding Bungamati received donations for various remarkable activities. There has been ongoing engagement with local children from badly affected neighborhoods to compensate personal situations of vulnerability and loss, as well as the closure of schools. Much attention was invested in the revival of traditional craftsmanship, including the reconstruction of shelters using local materials and knowledge. The initiative also tried to revive small businesses by helping them to rebuild workshops or connecting them to functioning market economies. To prevent further economic crises for families it supported the local community during the harvest season (due to ongoing construction work many people were not able to fully commit to fieldwork). The initiative's voluntary work, based largely on student activities and faculty members, slowed down with the continuation of classes at Kathmandu University's re-opened department of Art and Design.

We also help in the reconstruction of important heritage sites. Within a week of the earthquake, the surviving historical materials were collected from the rubble of the **Char Narayana Temple** (16th century) on Patan's Darbar Square with the help of the army, local police, and neighborhood volunteers. Axel Michaels, the patron of this project, reports: "Working in close cooperation with the Department of Archeology of Nepal, the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) has already initiated rebuilding efforts of the devastated structure to identify and reconstitute the carved architectural fragments of the building's original ground floor portals and first floor windows." In the coming months the work force will be increased to a team consisting of ten carpenters and woodcarvers and 15 laborers in order to allow identification, cleaning, and repair of all of the wooden fragments of the structure, especially those carved features.



Zwischengelagerte Holzschnitzereien des Char Narayan Temple



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The SAI Help Nepal campaign currently assists projects in three regions outside the Kathmandu Valley. Following the reconstruction work of **Shelters in Sindhupalchowk**, in particular in Salmi, Lapilang, and Baruwa villages, we are now supporting the rebuilding of Shree Rajeshowri Higher Secondary School in Sipapokhare under the patronage of Rajan Khatiwoda. This school has six hundred students enrolled from kindergarten to grade ten. Of the school's ten blocks, which included classrooms, laboratories, and a library, six blocks completely collapsed during the earthquake and three were partially damaged. Even though the school's management has been able to conduct classes, the adverse state of the classrooms and other buildings has greatly affected the quality of teaching, not to mention the emotional composure of the students.

In the northern part of Gorkha District, construction work at Lungtang Nunnery has started. Nadine Plachta, the patron of our **Rebuilding Tsum** project, and Timo Plachta, an engineer specialized in energy-efficient building techniques, carried out a detailed survey of the area in July, and the latter prepared a hundred-page booklet (including a master plan, building designs, environmental strategy, and construction manual) which he presented to the project team in October. Shortly thereafter, 18 workers from the Helambu region north of Kathmandu traveled to Tsum. In just over two months, they leveled the ground of the nunnery's new assembly hall, crushed stones, cut down trees, and worked the wood into shape. With the sudden drop of temperatures at an altitude of about 3600 m, the construction work has come to a temporary halt. We expect to resume work on this project after the springtime thawing period.



The building plan of Lungtang Nunnery gets its final touch.



Stonemasons have started with the preliminary construction works.



The relief material is equally distributed.

Drawing on fieldwork of Nadine Plachta, the **Lapchi Relief Project** is the latest addition to our immediate relief programs. Lapchi is an area located on the northernmost fringes of Dolakha District. So far relief efforts have not reached the mountainous community yet. Due to the low population (some seventy persons) and their insufficient proficiency in the Nepali language, along with the inaccessible terrain they inhabit at the country's periphery, the people of Lapchi are easily disregarded when it comes to distributing benefits. Yet the earthquake

destroyed most houses in the region. The Lapchi monastery and the pilgrimage sites also suffered severe structural damage. Immediately ensuing landslides blocked the walking path to the lowlands, which since then have remained inaccessible. Currently helicopters are the only means of reaching Lapchi. In view of these circumstances, the SAI Help Nepal initiative acceded to a request to arrange three helicopter flights to Lapchi, where food is still the top priority, along with the evacuation of the sick, injured, and elderly to Kathmandu.

Activities in Heidelberg

On December 17, the SAI will host a Nepal Bazar. Further details of the event will follow soon.

The next steps

On Friday, November 27, thousands of students lined Kathmandu's Ring Road, held hands, waved banners, and chanted slogans to protest against a border blockade that has been causing severe shortages of fuel, cooking gas, and medicines in Nepal for the past four months.

In a protest against Nepal's new constitution, which was promulgated in September, members of the Madhesi ethnic community have been blocking the main southern border points with India, preventing fuel and other essential supplies from entering the country. India, which has close cultural ties with the Madhesis, silently supports their demands by imposing severe customs regulations on the trucks waiting at the Indian side of the border.

As a result, "no fuel"-signs have become a common sight at all petrol stations in the Kathmandu Valley, in front of which vehicles queue in kilometer-long lines. Tourists have adapted to "no gas menus" in restaurants, and local residents have got used to seeing tea stalls closed. Taxi drivers complain about the loss of income and employees hang outside on overcrowded public vehicles to get to work. School life is disrupted, as buses have no fuel to take children to class and kitchens have no gas to cook meals for boarders with. The government has started to sell wood, adding to the deforestation in the country. And above all, hospitals are running out of medicine. Daily newspapers regularly report new clashes in the southern plains, with many people shot to death and many others injured.

At a time just before Christmas, which we value for its warmth and gratitude, and which we spend with our family, relatives, and friends in our homes, the people in Nepal are being confronted with another humanitarian crisis. The aftereffects of the earthquakes have still not been overcome. In face of the upcoming winter, the high mountain regions will soon be cut off from relief programs, leaving many families without adequate help.

We thus encourage you to continue supporting those who need you in Nepal. Your donations enable us to further work with our local coordinators on selected projects.

With kind regards for the festive season,

Nadine Plachta, with Manik and Ritu Bajracharya, Christoph Bergmann, Christiane Brosius, Niels Gutschow, Rajan Khatiwoda, Roberta Mandoki, Axel Michaels, Marcus Nüsser, Nike-Ann Schröder, and Davide Torri

Donation Account:

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