

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



NEWSLETTER
Edition 9,
December 2008

Dear friends of Sunrise,

A very HAPPY NEW YEAR to you all from everyone at Sunrise! We hope you had a wonderful festive season shared with family, friends and those important to you. Sponsors we hope you also enjoyed your hand made Christmas cards from your sponsor children; they certainly had fun making them for you!

2008 has been another amazing year for SCAI and Sunrise Orphanage, with many wonderful moments and great achievements by the children. We had 3 new children join us, we celebrated the festivals of Holi, Teej, Dasain Tihar, Christmas and the children's birthdays, we enjoyed visits from some of the children's sponsors, volunteers and an SCAI committee member, we went on some great excursions and did some fantastic extra-curricular activities such as holding our first Sunrise Sports Day and participating in the 5km Kathmandu marathon!



Above: Our 3 new children; brothers Bishal and his younger twins Binam and Bipin Thapa

We continued to reward the children with encouragement awards, teach them about their community and helping others through our Sunrise Outreach Program and expand the training and development programs to both the Sunrise children and the local community. Study, sport, music, dance, reading, prayer, meditation and special family time also continued to be big part of our lives throughout the year.

We also saw an all new SCAI committee (except me!) come on board which is going from strength to strength and we are now in the process of organizing some fantastic events in July/ August 2009 too, so please let us know if you would like to be involved in any way!

All the previous newsletters can be found on our website www.scai.org.au, so now we would like to share with you some highlights from the last quarter!

Christmas party/concert at Sunrise Orphanage

Being a predominantly Hindu nation, Christmas is not widely celebrated in Nepal. However our kids love to learn and experience new things so we held our own Sunrise Xmas party/concert, led by four of Santas special helpers.



Above: Pema Lama, one of Santas special helpers

We started the day with a delicious feast of brightly decorated Christmas cookies which everyone enjoyed immensely, shown by huge smiles, lots of laughter and bright coloured tongues!



Above: Isak Tamang and Palten Lama enjoying their Christmas cookies

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Above: Niruta Lama, Sudha Lama, Raji Tamang and Arati Tamang

We then started the concert by talking about what is important at Christmas; whilst it is great fun to celebrate festivals with yummy food, nice clothes, games and sometimes toys and gifts, its gifts from the heart that are the most meaningful and bring the greatest joy.

We made 90 red love hearts for the children and carers each with someone's name on it. Then one by one each child picked a love heart from santas sack and were asked to do one nice thing for that person over the Christmas period. We then stuck them around our 'Sunrise Christmas tree of love and happiness'.



Above: Sunrise Christmas tree of love and happiness with the children's gifts of love

The first 'act' involved a group of the older girls doing a nativity play; not quite like you may see in Australia but created lots of laughs and the main message was understood. From there children performed anything from songs, to dances, to dramas to telling jokes, so it was a great fun day for all!



Above: Some of the dancers, Muskan Sherpa, Arati Tamang, Susmita Lama, Raji Tamang, Laxmi Shakya, Sudha Lama and Niruta Lama

Tihar Festival

Tihar, also known as Diwali or Deepawali, is a colourful festival of lights and the second most important Hindu festival following Dasain. The festival lasts for 5 days and honours certain animals, starting with rice offerings to the crows on the **first day**, followed by honoring dogs on the **second day** with with tika's and garlands of flowers. This is always a pleasant surprise to most Nepali dogs, which are often found in mangy condition living on the streets. It is believed that it is dogs that guide departed souls across the river of the dead so they must not be forgotten at this time.

The **third day** of Tihar is the most important day of the festival when Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity, comes to visit every home that has been specially lit for her presence with candles, oil lamps and/or fairy lights – always a beautiful sight! A Laxmi puja (worship and offering) is then prepared and each person comes to say a prayer and receive a tika from their elders.



Above: Some of the girls at Sunrise preparing the Laxmi puja

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The **fourth day** continues with more Laxmi pujas and is the start of the New Year for the Newar people, the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley. In the evenings of the third and fourth days, groups of people walk around the neighbourhood stopping at people's houses they know, singing songs and dancing until the owner comes out with gifts of sweets, fruit, flowers and money. Around 30 of the older children from Sunrise, enjoyed these evening festivities!

The **fifth day** is known as '**Bhai Tika**' (bhai=younger brother), and on this day sisters bless their brothers wishing them a long, healthy, happy life by placing colourful tika's on their foreheads, along with a garland of flowers and a plate of fruit and sweets. The brothers then bless the sisters with a tika and some money. This was again a very special day for our children, with all of the girls blessing their Sunrise brothers, followed by the boys blessing their Sunrise sisters.



Above: Lasang Lama, Sadhumaya Buddha and Marium Tamang putting on the first three colours of the tika on their Sunrise brothers



Above: Ram Chandra Gharti with his colourful tika

Sunrise Birthdays

In typical Sunrise style we held our bi-monthly birthday party celebrating all those birthdays that fell in the last quarter of 2008. The children enjoyed birthday cake, being sung 'Happy Birthday' by their Sunrise family, playing games and receiving small gifts.



Above: Shankerman and Mangaldas Shrestha, Tashi Sherpa and Ganesh Rokaya having fun with the balloons!

Extra-curricular activities

We always keep the children busy with plenty of extra-curricular activities, but with all the festivals, moving house, plenty of visitors as well as regular studies and activities such as singing and dance lessons, drawing, art/craft and the training and development programs we didn't have time to fit much else in this quarter!



Above: Pasang Sherpa with some of his artwork

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Sunrise Outreach Program

The Sunrise outreach team, made up of a group of older children from Sunrise, continued to visit one of the largest slum areas in Kathmandu, where over 300 people live in make-shift bamboo and plastic homes along the filthy riverbank of the Kalimati River.

The Sunrise children are involved in talking to the local people about their past, the current issues they face, their needs and their dreams. They counsel some of the children, share some of their own experiences, values and opportunities available to them, in the hope of helping these poor children along a path to a better future.

Our last visit involved lots of singing as well as distributing beautiful hand knitted beanies that friends of Nana Pat, one of our dear Sunrise volunteers, had knitted and sent over from Australia. Coming into Winter the families were greatly appreciative, so thank you again to all those involved in knitting them!



Above and below: Some of the children in the Kalimati slums with their beautiful new beanies



Above: Ranjit Lama from Sunrise with Emma distributing the beanies in the Kalimati slums



New Sunrise homes

In October we had to move Sunrise to a new rental property just outside the Kathmandu Valley. We are now in two houses, known affectionately as Daisy and Avocado house (due to the 3 abundant avocado trees in the front yard!). The houses are located about 30m from each other and are surrounded by a few houses, rice fields and other crops, buffalo, goats and other animals. The environment is a vast improvement; being further from the city, there is less dirt, dust, pollution, less traffic and the views are amazing!

The children continue to go to the same school and love their new home. They were so enthusiastic about the move that in the few weeks prior we walked to the new homes several times to get started on the over-run gardens.



Above: Sunrise boys Saugat Mainali and Lokjan Rokaya looking after one of the babies in the slums

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Above: Some of the Sunrise boys after a working bee in the Daisy house garden



Above: The children living at Daisy house



Above: The children living at Avocado house

Sponsors and other visitors

This quarter we had many visitors from sponsors, donors and friends of Sunrise, including a group from Habitat for Humanity, and a group from Unique Journeys, led by long time Sunrise friends Jan Tracy and Gail Squire. In this

group was **Julie Ford**, who has been sponsoring Ranjita Panday for almost 3 years. Ranjita was absolutely thrilled to finally meet Julie and I think Julie was tickled pink to see how happy Ranjita was.



Above: Ranjita Panday with her sponsor Julie Ford

Sarah Thom has been a long time sponsor and supporter of SCAI, and has recently joined the SCAI committee as volunteer co-ordinator among other things. Sarah spent 3 weeks with us and had a wonderful time with her sponsor child Subash Tamang and all the other children. They loved having her there and we hope she comes back again soon!



Above: Sarah with her sponsor child Subash Tamang and friend Isak Tamang

Volunteers

Anne-Marie Battista, Pat Killelea, Jamila Parkin and Kumaran Yogaranandan joined us at Sunrise this quarter. **Anne-Marie** was a tremendous help to both the children and the carers, getting involved from day one with the children's activities as well as the household chores; washing, cooking, cleaning and getting the children ready for school which everyone appreciated immensely!

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Above: Anne-Marie with Sunita Tamang

Pat Killelea (affectionately known as 'Nana Pat') was much loved and appreciated. She undertook an incredible amount of work over her time at Sunrise, spending hours every day on the sewing machine, repairing clothes, making curtains, sheets and pillowcases as well as taking sewing and knitting classes for the children and carers. She also organized lots of fun activities for the children, including a mini sports day for the younger children, and was a great support to us all.



Above: Nana Pat busily sewing at Sunrise



Above: The winning team (tunnel ball and egg/spoon races); Kamdev, Ramesh, Sudha, Laxmi (back), Bipin, Durga and Tashi (front)

Kumaran Yogaranandan is our longest standing volunteer at Sunrise, this year being his third year in a row. Kumaran has shown amazing dedication to the children over these past couple of years and has been a tremendous support to us all, including SCAI in Australia. His gentle caring nature and willingness to help in any way, from specific tasks such as physiotherapy and tutoring the older children to general tasks, is highly valued by us all. We look forward to seeing him again at the end of 2009! Kumaran also sponsors three children at Sunrise Orphanage.



Above: Kumaran at Sunrise

Jamila Parkin is our youngest volunteer and has brought a fresh happy vibe with her to Sunrise. She has been a particular hit with the teenage girls and has been a great help with of all the children as well as the staff. Jamila is embarking on a great journey around the globe for several months, so we all wish you well Jamila!



Above: Jamila Parkin with Muskan Sherpa at Sunrise

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Training and Development Programs

Over the past quarter we have continued to expand our training and development programs so that not only the staff and children at Sunrise can benefit but also more and more needy people from within the local community.

The highlight for our Sunrise children was the sale of their thanka paintings, which took them over 80 hours to complete – quite a task given their studies and busy lives. They showed tremendous dedication and commitment (and skill!) and they were rewarded with their own bank accounts set up in their names with their own personal funds from their painting sales.

With the house move the older children can no longer walk to school (and cannot go with the rest of the children on the school bus as they study longer hours), so four of the older boys have used a portion of their savings to purchase second hand bicycles so they can ride to school each day. It is fantastic to see that already at the age of 15 and 16 they are working towards being self-sufficient in the future – well done boys!

We have two small thankas left and 17 children are currently working on new ones so please contact emma@scai.org.au if you are interested in seeing some photos or ordering one.



Above: Pema Lama with his new bicycle

As well as thanka painting and computing, the children have continued to receive ongoing training in basic life skills such as sewing, first aid, health and hygiene. We are always in awe of their enthusiasm and dedication to anything they undertake and they have developed a tremendous range of skills that will prepare them for a successful happy future.



Above: Lal Bahadur BK, Repa Tamang and Lokendra Tamang, three of around 30 children that attended Nana Pats sewing classes in November/December at Sunrise

We have an increasing number of students from the local community attending classes in basic computing, sewing, candle making and incense making. With the load shedding (power cuts) now up to 16 hours per day the candle making will be even more beneficial to the community as well as Sunrise, and we expect to see further growth of this program in the near future.



Above: Computer teacher at the Sunrise training and development centre

Rehabilitation Therapy Program

Sunrise also runs a rehabilitation program for the children with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, polio and minor deformities resulting from other diseases, mal-nutrition and surgical procedures. Our daily program is run by a wonderful young man called Surendra Bajracharya. Surendra is a loving, caring and very devoted therapist and we have seen tremendous improvement in these children since he has been working with them.

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Above: Suren with Ramesh Tamang and Shreya Magar in rehabilitation therapy at Sunrise

Due to the lack of government and community support for the disabled in Nepal, we are aiming to expand this program so that other needy people within the community can also benefit from our facilities and care.

Further, we are looking to include rehabilitation/physiotherapy as part of our work experience program for both the Sunrise and other youths within the community as they near the end of their schooling. This will increase their chances of employment as well as increase the services provided to often neglected disabled community in Kathmandu.

"See the Sunrise in Nepal FREE" fundraising program 2008

In 2008 we ran our first promotion whereby we invited individuals to raise **\$6000 for SCAI** and in return we rewarded them with a **FREE 21 day trip to Nepal, flights and all major expenses included**. The trip included a 12 day trek to Annapurna Base Camp, sightseeing in the Kathmandu Valley and Pokhara and some time with the children at Sunrise Orphanage.



Above: Participant Joanna O-Reilly at Sunrise



Above: Andrew, Jo, Paola and Paul on the trek

2008 was a great success so we are again offering this fantastic opportunity in 2009! If anyone is interested please contact emma@scai.org.au or see our website www.scai.org.au for details.

What is in store for 2009 and beyond?!

2008 has been a fantastic year with many major milestones. The children have developed in so many wonderful ways, physically, personally, academically and spiritually, and make us incredibly proud. They are bundles of joy and enthusiasm and we would like to thank you all sincerely for your support, without it, these children would not have had the opportunities they now have.

Sunrise Children's Village

In 2009 one of our major goals is to buy land on which to build Sunrise Children's Village, a self sustainable home for up to 100 children. Having a permanent (vs rental) home for both the current and future children of Sunrise will provide them with greater stability and will enable us to further expand our training, development and income generating programs both within Sunrise as well as the wider community. Land prices have increased dramatically over the past few years so we need your help today!



If you are interested in contributing to the Sunrise Children's Village land and building fund, please contact emma@scai.org.au.

Thank you again for your support and best wishes for a year full of love, joy, fulfillment and laughter!

Emma and the Sunrise family