

Monsoon 2009 Update

Congratulations! Both schools at Deusa and Garimudi achieved excellent School Leaving Certificate (SLC) results, with 100% passing at Deusa and over 90% at Garimudi. Both schools were in the top three schools in their districts, with Garimudi winning 100,000Rs (£800) for their consistently high results. Big congratulations go to two students at Deusa and about half of the 56 at Garimudi who passed with first class grades. Good luck in particular to the girl student from Deusa who managed a first class pass and is continuing with her 10+2 education in science at Kathmandu with the aim to become a science teacher.

Many thanks go to the volunteers who have spent time at the healthpost and school at Deusa and the two volunteers currently at Garimudi, setting up some computers a donor gave the school so they can start teaching the teachers and students some basics.

A very special thank you to colleagues at ICIMOD and friends in Kathmandu, who have provided support with donations of clothes, buying cards and coffee from Deusa to raise funds for stationary materials and also to Nepal Airlines for very kindly shipping some of the collected items to Kangil, the airport nearest to Deusa.

Healthpost

The healthpost at Deusa is running well, thanks largely to the hard work of Dev Kumari Rai, the Auxiliary Midwife Nurse (AMN) who keeps the place running smoothly every day for patients not only from the village, but from miles around.

Dr Satyan Rajbandari of HexN UK from Chorley, UK has been providing valuable support with regular supplies of medicines that are taken every month or so to the healthpost – on the backs of porters, with volunteers, or as luggage whenever anyone is flying to one of the nearby airports.



Taking the baby's temperature.

A number of medical students and a couple of nurses have spent a few weeks over the past few months helping to support Dev Kumari in her work. In a couple of weeks, medical students from Manchester University will be coming to help at the healthpost and also to provide some training at all of the schools in basic health and hygiene – especially the importance of washing hands! Volunteers at the school and healthpost recently have contributed the cans of paint to paint messages on the outside walls of the school toilets to remind the students to WASH THEIR HANDS! In this time of monsoon, the cases of diarrhoea are very high. In some places in Nepal this has reached epidemic levels and is a national crisis.

Deusa secondary school

As well as a volunteer helping get water to the healthpost last autumn, another volunteer has just completed building some new desks for use in a science lab that is to be set up at the school at Deusa. All that is needed are some benches now – then the plan is to provide some equipment to enable better teaching of science.

Deusa Secondary School is fortunate to be receiving from the government the long-overdue science teacher that was needed. Solukhumbu was one of the twenty districts across Nepal that has received extra teachers from the previous (Maoist) government. In addition school fees up to class 8 have been abolished and more books are supposed to be available at no cost (previously only primary course books were free to students). One of the 'volunteer' teachers at Deusa has been promoted and has taken up a full-time position at one of the nearby primary

schools. Two of the other volunteers have also secured proper teaching positions at the school. The lower secondary school at Ranem, about two hours from the secondary school has also at last received the much needed extra teacher, an English teacher.

Over the last few months, colleagues and friends have donated children's clothes to help the poorest children at Deusa, where the winter temperatures can be mean – but not cold enough to close the school! A distribution of clothes was made in the spring and more are being held in Kathmandu to be given out in the autumn, when the weather starts to get colder.

Garimudi secondary school

At Garimudi, two volunteers – the first to go there – have been busy setting up three computers that were donated by a French donor at the beginning of the year. So far only collecting dust, these new computers have not been used as none of the teachers have any experience to use them. When one of the volunteers owned up to being a computer whizz, this was a chance not to be missed. Although no volunteers have stayed at this very poor village before, the accommodation and meals provided by Dipendra Lama Tamang leave no doubt that volunteers will be assured of a very comfortable stay and welcome there in future.

Shree Hana Jyoti Secondary School in Garimudi is now registering for Class 11 students. By providing '10+2' or Class 11 and Class 12 tuition, this will be a great boon to the villagers, who will not need to bear the extra expense of sending their children to the neighbouring town of Charikot or Kathmandu. The school – already stretched with its 500 or so students and 15 teachers, will have to cover this extra class without any extra teachers from the government, at least for the first year. After completion of the coming year, it is hoped that the government will allocate an extra teacher. Nearly all of the teachers at Garimudi secondary school teach six-seven lessons out of eight per day, far more than the normal teaching load at a government school. RAN is going to provide an extra science teacher here. Now not needed at Deusa, Ram Kumar Mahato who has been teaching science for the past year there will be starting immediately at Garimudi. With some basic knowledge of computing, he will be a good student of the volunteers who will be there for about a month. As well as science, it is hoped that he will be able to teach some basic computing skills.

A French donor gave the school a choice: sports equipment or some computers. With limited grounds for sports, the answer was obvious. Three good, high specification computers arrived from Kathmandu at the beginning of the year, with a printer and UPS to protect them from the frequent powercuts that are a fact of life all over Nepal. After shaking off the dust, it was all systems go: everything had to be tested out. Mice had been busy chewing cables; one computer whined its protest and shut-down, overheating when processing got too much for it; another did not have the same software and had no CDROM.



Volunteers setting up the computers

The CDMA wireless phone, though registered for internet use as well as being used as a telephone – was locked in the head teacher's cupboard and of course, he was away from school for the rest of that day.

It is hoped to get some more books for the library at Garimudi school that was set up with a donation from Exodus UK. In particular, books for the new class 11 will be useful and some English medium course books for computing are already on their way to the school with the science teacher. As well as needing science materials for a science lab to be set up, (the school has the classroom), a longer term plan is to try to get some more computers as since

Class 10 numbers 89 (in two sections), the hands-on time each student can hope for on just three machines is going to be very limited.