

Village Hope Partnership Newsletter



To: Friends of Village Hope Partnership
From: Don Gielow, President
Date: April 2018
Re: Newsletter 7, Nepal Work Update

Greetings from Village Hope Partnership! Earlier this month, VHP sent Reverend Lisa Mays (our newest Village Hope Partnership team member), to visit some of the development projects in rural Nepal. Guided by Shanti Giri, Lisa experienced first-hand some of the results of VHP's collaborations with village communities, and got to hear of their hopes for the future. In this newsletter, Lisa will share some reflections about what she experienced during her visit.

A Different Kind of Luxury, Phulbari, Nepal

Many people in communities all over the United States of America are living in the lap of luxury. We have all we need, and then some, to live a full life. Luxury however, does not always lead to a fulfilling life. Often, those who have everything remain unfulfilled. One can possess many things but feel as if they possess nothing of true value in life.

What I discovered on my recent trip to Nepal, and in the village of Phulbari in particular, does not fit with our notions of luxury. Yet, there is great joy. And hope.

The history and even recent history of the people in the western plains of Nepal is that they were slaves. Bonded labor had existed in Nepal since the 18th century. This bonded labor arrangement was abolished after protests in 2000 and 2006 respectively. Many of the liberated slave families were released from the bond only to find themselves in poverty. They had nothing of their own.



In 2013, the Government gave a piece of land to the ex-slaves and their families. The land on which now sits the village of Phulbari is such land, and in the few years of occupying this land, the villagers' lives have been improved dramatically. Village Hope Partnership has helped this come about in significant ways.

The men in the village work as laborers, sometimes traveling hours away from their home. The money they make a day is comparable to \$3.50 US. This is not a wage

that can sustain a family of any size very well for very long. But now, through VHP, the women have been trained to sew, given sewing machines, and are able to provide clothing for their families, where before, they would have had to find the money to purchase clothing.

This might not sound like luxury to us, but what a remarkable sense of accomplishment these women are finding. As persons, they are strengthened to see that they now have the ability to make a difference in the lives of others. The women are planning to open a tailor shop of their own in their village and in the city where their earnings will increase. How happy they are that their life, and the lives of their families will be enriched in many ways.

When Shanti and I first arrived in the village we were met by Amar, a leader in the village, and invited to enjoy a meal. We were given a drink of water, which might not sound very special, but there is so much more to tell. The water came from a water pump, a few steps away, provided by VHP.

Before the water pump was installed, the women had to walk for many miles to find a place to dig a well by hand, or find where a well had been dug already, and wait, sometimes for hours, to draw water from the well and carry the water back home. A water pump has been a great luxury. VHP has provided six water pumps for the village of Phulbari.



In Phulbari sanitary outhouses have been built with the assistance of VHP. While less than luxurious, these buildings have been especially helpful to the women of the village. Before these were available, the only option was to walk alone outside the boundary of the village to relieve themselves. This was a dangerous venture, at night especially. Some would ignore the natural urges as long as possible which would cause sicknesses and infection. The quality of life is improving in many ways in Phulbari, Nepal.



A group of women were gathered outside the community building when I arrived. They were waiting for the visit from Village Hope Partnership. I felt so honored. They smiled warmly, and though I only know a very little of their language, there was a deep sense of communication. The heart can speak to another heart without any language in common.

In Phulbari, formerly an empty land, lives and livelihoods are growing and improving through the people's own newly acquired skills and efforts. There is a luxurious sense of security, joy in the present, and hope for the future in Phulbari, Nepal.

THANK YOU to the friends and supporters who make this work possible! *For more information, visit our website at villagehopepartnership.org. Village Hope Partnership is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, EIN# 47-2774879 Donations go 100% to programs for the poor. Administrative costs are paid from a special donation for that purpose. Donations can be sent to our office in San Mateo at 700 South Claremont Suite #223, San Mateo, CA 94402*