

**Nepal****October 20 – December 13 2014****Jan Laan**

October 20 i was on my way to Nepal again. It was an eveningflight with a stop at Abu Dhabi of 6 hours which was ok. It is always exciting to arrive at the Dutch airport and see how much weight i have with all luggage. I had 2 kg more than officialy allowed (32), 8.5 in my backpack and a plastic bag with a laptop of almost 7 kg. Fortunately it was no problem.

This time there will be less story to tell but mostly pictures to show. It is my 40th (or 41st?) time i visit Nepal. I had a great flight to Abu Dhabi and was transferred to business class, what a pleasure! Arriving at Kathmandu my taxi was not there but Nepalese people i know send me to the hotel by taxi. My 2 piece luggage was there as always.

On my first day at Kathmandu i bought some DVD's, i returned some goods and i had a meeting with the founders of Holland Building Nepal, Co and Corrie Reijnders. We talked about research of children with a disability. Sometimes i get requests and i managed to make some arrangements about it. I sponsored a student for her study. Eveningtime it was Laxmi Puja (part of Tihar) at the hotel. I joined them at the lightceremony. Later that night i rearranged my backpacks for my trip to Chitwan.

CHITWAN

Next morning i drove with Laxman of Himalaya Glacier tours (trackingagency) by taxi to Chitwan. It was very quiet on the road so i arrived at Chitwan after 3 hours and 45 minutes. A record !

At Chitwan i had my ritual of unpacking and installing all my luggage. This way i could sort out things for school, library, trainingcentre, healthposts and some gifts for some friends of mine. Susanne and her family had taken some laptops of mine with them to Nepal so i had lots of things to distribute this time. Because of Tihar all was closed which gave me an extra day off. I used it to talk with some families about microcredit for growing mushrooms. We agreed that both me as well as the 2 families will contribute to the project. The profit will be used for second harvest for example. Next couple of days i spend time at the trainingcentre for the blind at Jhuwani. It was necessary to spend time there to fix lots of things: all doors were checked on termites and other defects. At the end all was nice again.

November 2nd we started a new training for blind. The training took 10 days in making candles and scent. It was heartbreaking to hear their stories. Some blind were abandoned from their homes by their family.

Again a party at Chitwan: Chitrasari. 2 days of festivities at the main bridge. I had some meetings with staff and came to agreement on several issues.

For 'installatietechniek Friesland voor Nepal' i visited schools, healthpost and womengroups and made pictures of toilets. Main goal was to hand over information to students of 'de Friese Poort' who will visit Nepal at February again and who are going to repair what needs to be repaired and who will give training at schools.

I left by taxi to Pokhara: 4 hours driving. At Pokhara i unpacked again and visited friends. I had a meeting with Acap and organisation for blind of Khom. He is experienced in process of making bamboo chairs by blind people. I met 2 people from Chitwan and i went to visit the Tibetan Refugee Camp with them and arranged a guide for them.

INTO THE MOUNTAINS

Preparations for clean drinking water project for Ghandruk and Tadapani. November 9th, Jagan – owner of Trekkers Inn at Ghandruk, picks me up with old Toyota. It is about one hour driving. At Birethanti i leave two pieces of luggage for Ghorepani at hotel Sunrise. The owner is chairman of the management committee. The other bag i take along to Ghandruk. People from Ghorepani make sure my luggage is getting transported to Ghorepani. Off we go in the old Toyota thru rivers and very bad roads with lots of bumps and rocks. Occasionally the car hits the ground. The curves were very challenging with steep slopes. This adventure lasted for about one hour.

Last part of this trip we walked to Ghandruk. Just before arriving at the village the welcome committee was awaiting me with scarfs, malla's and flowers. We went to visit the children daycare. Due to a landslide the soil in front of the building was lowered. People were busy fixing this. Costs 4000 euro.

I left them a laptop, some DVDs and cartoons. That will give them a break sometimes. Two ladies, one of them is a teacher, are running the daycare with 20 children. This way the parents can work outdoors in the field. Daycare is open every day.

I visited the Healthpost and had a nice conversation with Acap Ghandruk and with a 'crazy' australian, who was spotting wild cats at the jungle. He had a special camera to make some special shots.

Next morning – after my standard breakfast of oatmeal, 2 chai and 2 toast – we left for Tadapani. I walked with a carrier, Ananda of Acap and Jagan Gurung. This woman has done so much for Ghandruk community and is president of the womengroup and also works for Acap. The view was spectacular! The mountains appear very close and we had a clear view on Fishtail, Annapurna South and Himchuli, mountains higher than 6000m.

The trip to Tadapani is a great junglewalk with lots of green and waterfalls. After 3 hours walking i arrive at Tadapani and meet Saili of hotel Grand View. After half an hour the others arrived. The inauguration could start. According to Nepali tradition of course.

Tadapani is a village with 8 hotels in the middle of jungle. My room was overbooked and i was designated to another. There are 3 paths leading to Tadapani so no wonder it was busy. Around 3 p.m.the inauguration-ceremony started. After a short introduction i got a lot of tika's and malla's. Ananda also was part of it and was covered in red powder looking like Holifestival had started. Rest of the crowd looked a lot more modest in decoration. I cut the ribbon, turned the handle of the watertank and filled the first bottle of clean drinking water. Of course i tasted the water myself and it tasted great. The installation was put in a simple house but will be put in a seperate building. Clean drinking water project no 4 is completed but no 5 is already in the pipeline. If it can not not be realised at Birethanti it can start at Shauli Bazaar, a bit north of Birethanti.

November 11 I had my breakfast outside in the morningsun at 7. My carrier was already waiting and at 7.30 i left Tadapani and started walking. The first part of the trip is descending to a little river. From there it goes up again. I have been walking this route many times before but this time it felt different to me. Despite my easy pace and a bottle of cola it feels hard to climb. My legs won't move, my breathing is out of control and i feel all sore. Many times i have to sit for a little break. Cola is not helping. My carrier doesnt know what to do with me and he doesnt speak any English. I know it is not a long distance from there, but not feeling well, half an hour seems a long time. I arrive at the top at a house and see Ulleri in the distance. After 10 minutes the complaints disappear. On we go, along hills and the deepest gorge in the world (more than 2000meter). Soon we arrive at Banthanti and from there we walk in 1,5 hour through the snow where Banbir Gurung has a lodge and more than 300 yaks. Banbir was not there so we continue our walk. I meet Safi, a guide who is walking to basecamp with 2 Dutch people. He gives me 2 apples from Marpha (Mustang). On the top at 3200 meter there is less snow and through long stone steps we reach Annapurna View Hotel where Sapana, Devi and her mother live.

They have been renovating the hotel with stone steps, a better floor and shower and the outside was all painted. The shower was lovely. It was 3 days ago i had my last shower... Of course i visited Binu, our nurse at the Healthpost at Ghorepani. They had been waiting for me with flowers but i came from other direction. We had a nice talk and settled a meeting. Because Binu's mother had been ill she spend nursing her at her home at Nawalparase spending all her money for hospitalvisits and treatment. It was money she had been saving for making her own home.

Eveningtime i had a simple meal with soup and chapati and then a good night sleep. As the weather was great there were hundreds of tourists enjoying a beautiful sunrise at Poon Hill. The rescue helicopter had to fly twice: one person with altitude disease and another with a broken leg.

It was very nice at Ghorepani but there was a bit of a problem. During the meeting lots of issues came along. Including the selfishness of people. Some want to leave, others don't.

For example: the inverter of the waterproject was broken down. As a result of a mistake of the electricien guy it was exploded but no one knew where he was nor what to do with it. I discussed this thoroughly and finally the people of Ghorepani apologized and promised to report these sort of things immediately in the future. It seemed the inverter was at Pokhara but all taken apart. So we had to order a new one costing 600 euro.

On my last day Bikas from Ulleri arrives with dental problems. Binu knows how to fix this: she gives him some anaesthesia and some medicine. When the pain is not getting less in a few days he has to go to Pokhara.

I get a call from Jagan telling me their waterproject is certified! That we still have to do at Ghorepani and Ulleri. Som, my carrier – carrying my two backpacks!, and i leave for Ulleri. After 35 minutes we reach Nangethanti and after 1 hour 15 minutes we reach Banthanti at the lodge of Gun where i will stay till next day. The next morning a quiet walk to Ulleri. During our walk we see some horses and donkeys with big bottles of drinking water, meant for Neopane and other places.

I stay at another hotel as usual as SuperView is fully booked. No problem as i can stay anywhere. There is still no wifi but there is a cybershop, but they ask a lot of money. While talking with the owner of the cybershop we exchange thoughts and i shared information of Alysha cybercafe from Chitwan with him.

Maya, my coördinator is married and expecting her first child, according to Nepali tradition. The child is expected in January. She still works very hard, at school and at home for her mother.

Before i leave we have a meeting with several committees. The healthpost was finished and looked great. Very classy. In case of problems they can contact Binu at Ghorepani healthpost. At the library i received more beautiful malla's, katta, scarf and big tika on my head. Problem was that the classroom and stairs meant to be build through a sponsor that donated money for that particular goal, wasnt ready yet as agreed upon earlier. Only thing ready was the concrete floor. After some tough questions by me the problem seemed that there were no labourers for the construction to be found as they were working at hotels and houses at Ulleri. To me that was unacceptable and why was i not informed about that!? We agreed that if the building is not finished by next time i visit i will take the money out of the project. The chairman of the schoolcommittee agreed on that. Chairman Gun of the managementcommittee guarantees me all will be fine. The school receives laptops and inkcartridges. They have a request for a beamer but that has to wait as i want them to finish the classroom first.

I have a meeting with Khom of the organization for blind, again a talk with cybershop owner and Alysha from Chitwan. With Gun i talk about honey hunting in Dhili Bharang, a village nearby. Khem Pun, the teacher comes to visit me asking me when i come visit the school.

I say goodbye to Maya who is pregnant 7 months. I wait for Gun at hotel Superview. The agreed Nepali time was 8 but actual time was 9.15 for him to arrive. We left with Gun and his horse. It is a beautiful tour along the mountain to Dhili Bharang. While walking i see rubbish everywhere on the path and i tell Gun this is unacceptable. There is glass, cans, groceries leftovers, paper. He tells me they will work on that. 10.30 we arrive at Dhili Bharang and there is no one to be seen at the bridge. We do see approximately 25 bee-nests. One hour later the people of Dhili Bharang arrive and we talk about cooperation with Ulleri with regard to the wild honey. They also ask me for some support for their healthpost and school. I told them we can discuss that another time when i have more time. Cooperation with Ulleri for selling the wild honey will be a good source of income.

I leave for Birethanti through another route. Gun leaves to Ulleri by horse. Two boys take me safely to Sudame which was one hour walk. Another hour walking i reach Birethanti. To my surprise Yam my driver was already waiting for me there. My luggage had also arrived. After a nice taxiride through some small waters and sharp rocks we reach Pokhara. I long for a hot shower! I unpacked my bags and coming days i will spend at Pokhara. Babita and Resham from the trainingcentre are joining me there for a meeting with Khom of the institute for the blind about setting up a new training: making muda – bamboo chairs. I had another meeting with manager of Acap about recycling glass in the mountains. It is a huge problem. Bottles of cola or beer can be brought into Pokhara where one can get a certain amount for recycling. I visited the Tibetan Refugeecamp and left two walkingsticks there as well as bandage for healthpost. Next time i will bring more.

We had a good meeting with Khom of the institute for blind about the new training. Also the trainer, Ramesh, was present. He will hand over a list of goods we need for starting this training so all will be clear for both staffmembers as well as mr.Hari of Crown Himalayas and his daughter Uma. In return Khom received two laptops for his computerclass. Together with Babita and Resham we leave to Chitwan, driven by Yam, arriving at Chitwan within nice time. I say goodbye to Babita and Resham, we will meet tomorrow again. Same day i attend a meeting with the honeyman, Iswori, at Jhuwani. 25 bee-keepers gather there to get a better cooperation. As a matter of fact at the top floor of the library are two big bee-nests of wild bees. They plan to take some honey out of one nest, only when nature provides enough food for the bees. Still no success for my wild rockhoney however I did receive a bottle of honey from Bikas (teacher at Ulleri).

Next days i have been busy for Wout and his foundation. Making pictures, meetings with schools, healthpost, women groups. Students of 'de Friese Poort' will leave to Nepal on February 12 to renovate toiletbuildings and to educate at school. I wrote down all information necessary like emails, names and what needs to be done.

November 27 i get a transport by bike to visit Dev. Dev is an ICT student who i sponsored along with some other people. He is getting married. From his parents house the guests will leave to Bharatpur where his bride lives. Arriving I found Dev in a room in the middle of his broomoutfit. ~~It was~~ a hearty welcome. His father was in

middle of puja with a priest. Then it was Dev his turn. After the puja we walked with singing and dancing women behind the car of the broom. An elephant with mahut was leading the parade and as we arrive at Tadi Bazaar the elephant leaves the crowd and we continue to Bharatpur by bikes and busses. It was not my first experience with a hindu wedding. At Bharatpur the ceremony is done at a bhudist temple. Very impressive and too much to explain all that happened. After many rituals the bride will be escorted by a familymember to Dev and they will sit down at a chair. Around 5 we get some food and it is already dark when we leave by buss and bikes. In between us is a tractor with all gifts for the couple on it like furniture, bed etc.. On the highway towards India the tractor is taken aside by the police. The pile was stacked too high and it seemed the lights were not working. It resulted in paying a fine. Arriving at 9 in the evening at Dev his house again crowds of dancing women and fireworks. They were throwing water and put the tika's nicely again. At 10 i left with a nephew on his bike back to my hotel. At the bridge we were stopped by some police but the papers were fine.

Next day i was invited again for some real Nepali food with fish (with bones), pieces of goat and it was all very spicy to my opinion. For most of the guests it was fine. I enjoyed being part of this wedding and although i have a busy schedule i would not have missed this.

MUSHROOM PROJECTS

Next day i go to Jhuwani, for a meeting at the trainingcentre for the blind. I agreed with the community to start a microcredit for growing mushrooms. The deadline for setting up all was November 25th. I was wondering what they had been doing while i was elsewhere but as i could have expected: nothing had been done! This meant no money. I was really disappointed. I gave them 2 days to get everything sorted out that had to be done to start the project. With help of Somlal who had experience in growing mushrooms they managed to get all preparations done. The greenhouse was about 3,5 by 2,5 meter. Covered with black plastic. 15 people were interested and we agreed to start the project for 2 families. The training was in Nepali and was completed in 2 days including some theory. Then we started the project with cutting hay in little pieces, cleaning, drying and steaming. Then the hay was put in plastic bags with seeds of mushrooms putting in there row by row. Then the bags are closed and put or hung in the greenhouse. For about 24 days it stays like this, then the bags are opened and the new mushrooms will be sprinkled with water. After that they can be picked and sold with profit. It is an ongoing process. The first harvest has already been sold. Maybe we can start two other projects in March. Sometimes it needs a lot of patience to get things done.

I had couple of meetings with candlefactory at Chitwan, with the library, the healthpost and with the staff of the trainingcentre. It was clear to them that we could manage the training with one person less. In the past we had two parttime ladies working for the trainingcentre. But many times it was a problem because both ladies are also responsible for the hostel were 24 blind stay. People attending a training receive food and sleep at the centre. So when the trainingcentre needed food at the

same time they needed food at the hostel. That did not work out well. So we want to change the position into one fulltime position for one lady who cooks only for the trainingcentre. Working in Nepal one learns to discuss things over and over again. Later on Nepali people will say it is okay but that takes some time and a lot of patience. When you do not respect their way of dealing with these matters it will give a lot of problems. On december 4th it was national disability-day organised by the Lions club. Nice initiative but there was food brought to the hostel? They have enough food, why not bring some braillebooks or toys?

I called with Ulleri. They have to pay a lot of money for the honey. I told Gun that if they only think about the money and are not the least cooperative I will not return to Dhili Bharang to talk about healthpost and school.

One night at Chitwan before returning to Kathmandu. It was quite a night! I knew about wild elephants at Sauraha but at 11 at night i woke up from a terrible sound. I never heard a sound like that. I did think it was a wild elephant and not a rhino. But i never expected it so close to my door. I did not dare to move nor turn on the light. After 5 minutes i walked to the door slowly and tried to open it. I heard some Nepali people talking and climbing to the first floor by stairs. And yes: there was a wild elephant. With sticks they chased him away through Susila's garden leaving a complete mess at the banana-area.

December 6th i leave for Kathmandu by taxi. Ram is joining me and after Naubise (25 km before entering KTM) the traffic gets crazy as it is a winding road. A lot of trucks got stranded there. Driving in Nepal means that the taxi is passing traffic just before a curve, just using its horn and hoping all goes well... Sometimes the car in front of you will signal it is safe to pass by but still it is a hazardous thing to experience.

Last couple of days at Kathmandu i shop and buy some singing bowls. These i sell with profit and that money i use for financing the microcredit projects. I visit Yogendra, owner of the music store. He has to leave his shop because of a reconstruction. I talked with Bimal of Holand Building Nepal foundation about Monica, a handicapped girl that will be getting some help through them. As it seems she had hearing problems as well as some autism. At least she will be helped now. I visited many friends. I was at the opening of another new restaurant The Ship of Sagar Pandey, who also runs 5 hotels at KTM. Sagar is the founder of Himalayan Trekking and we shared some business in the past. It was a great party with tasting wine from Italy, South-Africa, Australia and France. There was some good cheese and excellent food with a delicious desert. So i need not to be hungry ever as i know lots of places with good food by now. I had some nice talks with Pramod, Nilam, Mohan, Yogendra, Premila and Sarda.

Sarda works at the reception of my hotel and arranged a room on top floor with a big screen television. Sarda thank you. I hope to be back in March 2015 with some of the boardmembers of Nepal Pariwar Holland, so we can visit some projects together.