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Newsletter: March-April 2010

Namaste,

After two months spent in the region of Humla, our team of volunteers shared some great news with us:

- The children's house in Simikot has been officially opened for a month now, and the children have already found their marks
- Bijae is back with his parents (see letter of February 2010); he will return to village life, the love of his family and his new school.

Unfortunately, this good news comes in a political situation that has been tenser in recent days, with an upsurge in Maoist activities in the capital and the rest of the country.

To address all these issues and define the future plans of the association, we remind you that you are all invited to attend the Karya's general assembly that will be held during the 12 and June 13 weekend, at the plateau des Glières, Haute-Savoie.

Enjoy your reading,

On behalf of Karya,
Adeline.

➤ Moving of a part of the Karnali house to Simikot (Humla)

Late March, the 20 younger kids (under 12) moved from the Karnali house to Simikot, returning to live in their traditions, close to their families. They named their new home "**Karnali 2!**" as the Karnali River is flowing at the feet of their village in Humla.

Older children remained in Kathmandu to complete their studies.

Berthille, a volunteer since last September, tells us:



The joy of returning to Humla, after so many years

« Finally, here we are! D-day! On March 24, 2010! We start moving children's house, after one month preparing each bag, weighting furniture and kitchen items, counting every notebook, pen and eraser, all needed for a school year. After having answered every question of the children, having checked that nothing is missing, we are finally all ready for the big day.

Everyone slept on the roof the last night, one last night under the stars during which the elders have

been telling stories to their little brothers. They wanted to stay together before splitting up...

8:00am...., the truck arrives at the house. I don't understand why so early as the departure is scheduled at 4:00pm. We can feel excitement inside the house, everyone is turning around. The more impatient ones already have their bag on their shoulders. Don't worry, everyone will leave, but it's not time yet. We start loading the furniture and bulky in the truck, which will free some space in the living room which has become a real flea market. The elders take care of loading the truck and make returns trips to the bus which couldn't come closer to the house. They are also keeping on eye on the bus that is now loaded and is just missing its passengers. If we leave too early, we'll arrive too early at the hotel, which won't be open, so no need to hurry.



The elders are loading the bus

12:00pm...., I observe the children. They are very excited by this long trip. They try not to show it, but they are also sad to leave those who are staying. Even when the Didi apply the Tika on their front head, a strong symbolic moment, though, they all look at each other, head down. No emotional breakdown, no tears.

2:00pm...., we leave the children's house, everyone is accompanying us: the elders, the Didi, the director, some school friends and even some neighbors. Everyone is following in single file through the rice fields, this is a sacred procession. Pandabi cracks at that time, his grief is just too heavy, these partings him tear the heart, I hold his hand; we walk together to the bus.



Travel by bus from Kathmandu to Surkhet (15h)

4:00pm.... After waiting for the driver to return from whence I know, we were able to board and say goodbye for the last time. The elders are waving to us, the journey begins. After a few minutes, the bus is strangely calm. Everyone is in his thoughts. Some of us have traces of tears on their cheeks; others prefer to sink in a deep sleep, while a few ask for plastic bags in case they would get sick. And then gradually people start to speak, everyone is in his commentary on what he sees outside, they laugh... It's too good to hear them laugh... soon they start singing. It is sweltering in the bus, we are experiencing the first heat of the summer season and the traffic jam out of the valley are a real test for children, they begin to get impatient... the driver, understanding, puts a DVD on TV. It's an easy but effective solution to moderate the children.

7:00pm.... First stop, the driver is hungry; the children want to go to the toilet. It was at that time that children begin to ask questions:

-« Sister? When will we get there? »

-« Tomorrow morning Babu. It depends on the road, but we should arrive in Surkhet by 10:00am tomorrow »

Seeming to think seriously, he asks again:

-« And where do we sleep? »

-« In the bus Babu, we'll spend the night driving »

-« So tonight the bus is our bed, our house?

Hey, that's cool! »

Then children asked another bunch of questions about the trip.

-« Where is the hotel? Will our parents be in Simikot when we'll arrive? What will we eat tonight? How much time will we spend in Surkhet? Do we take a plane or a helicopter? »

I patiently answered every question so they can be reassured once and for all. I had to answer fifteen times the same questions before they finally got to sleep around 11pm, just after a stop in Daal-baht. I watched them sleep, thinking "Here you are Babu, you're returning home, finally!"

I remember Ananda and Adan who did not lose a thing of the trip, sitting on the edge of their seats, straight; they watched everything that was happening on the road. They collapsed from fatigue in the night.

We had two days off to recover from this exhausting journey in Surkhet in a hotel. During these two days we visited the area and especially the airport, the collective interest was focused on aircraft and helicopters that could be seen taking off. Once again questions flew: Which plane do we take? AT what time? How do we do with furniture? Will we board on only one plane?



Boarding time

March 27th, 5:00am, everybody is ready, his bag on his back. We had tea, milk and biscuits for breakfast. We are heading to the airport to take the "long waited" plane. The children have been very patient. Unfortunately, there were not enough places on the plane so I had to stay in the waiting room with 3 children. We watch our friends' plane taking off. I reassure the kids saying that we'll take the next plane. An official of the airline tells us that ultimately it will not be possible to fly the same day because there will be no second plane. I explode!! I do a little scandal at the airport, threatening to complain to the office in Katmandu. I say that it's just unthinkable that these three

children miss the welcome by arriving home the next day. The scandal works, as we take off 20 minutes later, with bags and other furniture loaded on the plane. The smile on the ears and head in the clouds my 3 babus are stuck to the window and contemplate their region from the sky. Of course I can't avoid a:

- « Hey look Sister !!!! That's the Karnali River??!! »

Landing in Simikot is rough. We are greeted by a woman who was expecting her second son. She is overwhelmed by happiness. She applies the Tika on our forehead and shows us the way. We arrive at the new children's house, the new Karnali Home. Most of the children are in their bedroom, talking with their parents, brothers, sisters, uncle, aunts... There is a lot of people in the house. It's really good to see all these shining faces, to see our babus happy.

A child calls me from upstairs:

-« Hey Sister? I'll be able to see my parents, and not only for holidays, right? Now I can see them often, this is great! »

Seven days ago we took the responsibility of hosting in the same house, seven children from the same district and from the Solhimal Umbrella Foundation. They also came to live closer to their families and have met again with their brothers and sisters. The parents came in turn to welcome their child; I could never recreate the joy of this mother who found her daughter. She kissed me in a way that overwhelmed me. I found myself in the same room as them. It is as if she wanted to verify the actual presence of his child after six long years of absence and so much anguish. These reunions were very strong, it was magnificent.

The lives of 26 children now living under our responsibility in Simikot changed somewhat, but the children were quick to adapted to their new home, and especially to a lot more freedom in the district. I spent three weeks with them and I was delighted to see them go walking with their father or brother. I've even been surprised when, one morning, one of our Babus arrived late for Daal-Baht. I asked him, although I knew the answer:

-« Where do you come from? »

-« I was in my village. I came by horse with my father », he answered with a big smile on his face and happiness shining in his eyes.

They also were very happy to swim again in the Karnali, the river of their childhood memories, despite the 5 hours walk to reach it... Soccer games are also part of the "ritual" down in the

village. They found lots of friends and they are very proud to come back home with the win.

Now we must concentrate on future projects, especially the project on assistance to the school of Simikot.

This trip was the culmination of my volunteering; I'll be back to France very soon and enjoy fresh air and Simikot babus and nanys already missing me terribly.



The children, back home, in Simikot!

➤ **Bijae returns to his parents, in Humla**

Story by Christine:

« April 6, we are ready to leave, en route for a beautiful adventure on Humla's paths, from Kolti to Simikot. Early in the morning, incense is burning in front of house Karnali. It's a highly emotional moment for our group: Bijae, Rajan, Binod, Farid and me.



Rajan, Farid, Bijae, Binod and Christine

Bijae, what's happening in his little child head? He leaves Karnali house to return to his family. Accompanied by his older brother Rajan, he is happy, that's for sure. He is turning a page of his life, he returns to his parents, this family link which makes his eyes shine with happiness.



Bijae

Everything is going very fast, as contrary of the usual Nepali way. After a day in the bus, we visit Nepalgunj in a dark and warm night, aboard two rickshaws. Early in the morning, we just have time to buy groceries for the travel (rice, lentils, biscuits, carrots) and then we jump on board of a small bus to Surket. Once there, we immediately board the plane which takes us to Kolti airport.

Everything is so different! Strangers are a curiosity, they are observed. There is no way to have single minute of tranquility.

Our 3 carriers join us the following day and the adventure begins.

Binod, the elder of Karnali house just passed his exams and he is on holidays for 3 months. He will be more than our Nepali/English translator during the expedition. He will work very seriously, always smiling and he will be very important to get in touch with people, to explain, inform about children trafficking.

By discovering Humla, you better understand the reality of this country, this region, this people. And you better understand the chaotic path of many children.

Karnali river, you have to follow it, observe and contemplate it in order to understand how important it is in the hearts of children. The river is here, beautiful, changing, dictating villagers' life rhythm. But in higher villages, water is rare and precious, used for irrigation, to allow seeds to grow well.



Karnali River

The dry season and its heat, from 9am, are bothering us along paths: drinking and refreshing ourselves is more than just envy. The earth is dry, harvesters are over and food stocks are diminishing in villages. The rice is becoming rare but they have to eat.

Humla then becomes a meeting point, with lots of rice bags (from a food program) that travel until late in the day: dozens of little white spots climbing up the path, each one being a man, a woman and a child, carrying up to 60kg to feed their family while waiting for the rain.

What to think about this pain in regard of our occidental over consumption?

Long steep uphill to reach a village, to avoid a landslide or a cliff, vertiginous downhill that aspire us toward the Karnali River, punctuate days of walking. Along these steep slopes, only small paths can be found, on which hundreds of little mountain goats are carrying rice or salt bags. Here, we encounter donkeys loaded with stones, there, a buffalo walking slowly, which make us careful.

Sleeping on the roof becomes the ultimate comfort to enjoy stars in the night, and to avoid packing us in small warm and fumed rooms. This way we can also listen to Humla getting asleep, Humla waking up.

But happiness in the eyes of children, parents and grand-parents, is far more important, Humla. After two days walking, we arrive in Biuri, the village of Bijae during dry season, by the river (his family lives in Rugin the rest of the year). The more we progress, the more excitement can be felt

in the two brothers. They are returning home! Bijae feels comfortable right away. His dad is here, who seems to protect him already. His grand-mother and his cousins are also here...Bijae is happy. His mother will arrive later, with the goats.

We quickly leave the next morning so Bijae can settle in gently. He will spend a few days in the village with his brother Rajan. Coming back from Simikot, Julien will take him to his new school in Mattadi, 3 days walking from here. His dad and Rajan will accompany them. He will reside in this school and will be able to return home for every holiday. His family can also visit him anytime.

Bijae has been lucky to return to his family, thanks to his parents who accept their responsibilities. They are happy to have their son back and they understood what children went through with the traffickers. Karya will continue to ensure financial support for tuition and regularly check that everything goes well.

Karya projects actually materialize when reunification is possible and that happiness can be seen in the eyes of everyone.

After that first dive into the reality of Humla, our journey is punctuated by numerous times, all as strong.

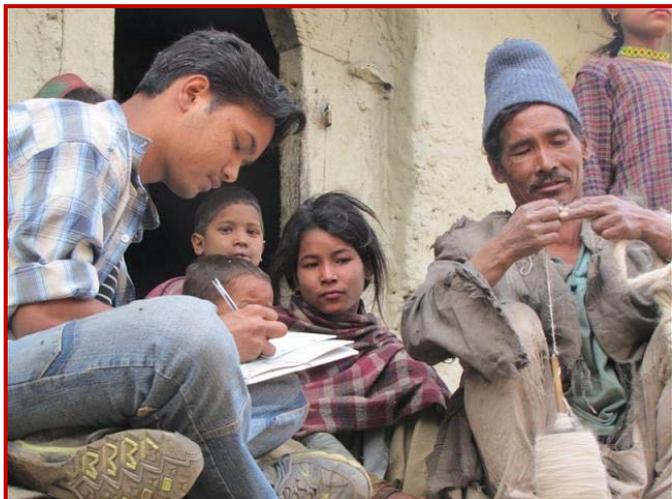
Shreenagar, Jaira, Ripa, names of villages that line the Karnali River and each time families are happy to get news, to receive photos of their children. Other, on the other hand, are still searching, hoping that one day, they will see again a daughter, a son, taken by trafficked since many years.

By talking with families, a great deal of recognition can be read in their eyes, but what a suffering to endure:

- This mother, a widow, has to feed her children, to take care of all tasks in the house, to take care of the cow, along with sowing and harvesting. How can she pay for scholarship?
- This other mother, who's been sick for many years now, who has nothing to heal, who even lost any hope for better days. When she managed to reach the nearest hospital (5 days walking + one flight + one day by bus, all paid with borrowed money), the doctor, without examining her said: "you come from a village; you just have to wait for death!" Can we tolerate this?

For all the parents we met, a picture or a letter from their child becomes a treasure, the one that you keep precious, the one from the returning child.

These moments, where Binod reads, translates and writes with families are long and intense. You have to take the time to explain, to listen and explain again.



Binod's working with families

After all these meetings with the parents of Chakka, Aka, Binod, Kamal, Mangali, Thama, Chandra, but also those of children from other organizations like Umbrella, we have a last night along the Karnali river.

The next day, a last big uphill brings us to Simikot to discover the new Karnali house with its 27 children, full of life, happy to receive news from the elders who stayed back in Katmandu, happy to be with their old brother Binod.

There, in the middle of the scene, I just want to say: What an achievement that this house in Simikot! Karya is making big progress in its projects, thanks to Julien, the on site coordinator, thanks to our partners, NGN, TDH, THIS. This kind of adventure gives all their sense to Karya's projects. I've been able to better understand this tough reality and to say "Thank you!" to all these little European ants who participates in giving these children of Humla their smile back. »

➤ Press review

Tensed political situation in Nepal:

On the 1st of May, 20 000 Maoist soldiers met in the capital in order to have a day of action. They requested schools as an accommodation and threatened to racket people for food.

As soon as Sunday the 2nd of May, an undefined strike has been started by the Maoists until they regain power and form a new government.

This strike blocks the whole city (no public transports, all stores are closed, as well as schools

...). Regularly, fights break between strikers and police.

For now, the safety of children and volunteers is provided, but outputs are limited.

Fight against illegal orphanages in Nepal

The government of Nepal has decided to close illegal orphanages. These don't respect security and hygiene conditions, as they are more a way for some unscrupulous people to make money. Children from these houses will be placed into houses that are registered.

➤ Actions in France

Photo exhibition in Mont-Saxonnex, 1st / 2nd of May:

We'd like to thank Alain and Liliane who invited us to participate to their photo exhibition from Nepal. The weekend has been fulfilled with encounters and exchange. With the exposition « Humanitarism, yes, but not no matter how » and the slideshow Humlako Kéta Kéti, we've been able to make people aware of child trafficking in Nepal.

ImaginaCtion organization:

We'd also like to thank the ImaginaCtion organization which distributes its revenues to organizations that help children who are victims of conflicts around the world, like Karya.

Fare trade market in Cluse, le 24 avril:

Karya organization participated to the fare trade market in Cluse on Saturday the 24th of April. A Documentary has been aired by Canal C, which can be seen on:

http://www.canalctv.fr/Grand-Marche-du-Commerce-Equitable-2010_a1351.html

➤ General assembly of Karya : 12th and 13th of June at the plateau des Glières

The general assembly will be held Saturday the 12th of June at FOL 74 center in the Métralière, Plateau des Glières (74).

On this occasion, we invite you to join us for this weekend. We'll have the opportunity to know us better and to understand our actions in Nepal.

Agenda:

Saturday:

- opening at 9:00am (come with picnic lunch),
- 2:00pm: General Assembly
- Nepali evening

Sunday morning: walking in the Plateau.

A 15€ fee per person per night (bring a sleeping bag), 1 dinner and 1 breakfast. You can come with your family, as a discount is offered for children.

If you want to join us, please register by email.

How can you help these children?

Karya depends on donators and sponsors in order to complete its projects.

Here is what your money allows us to do for children ...

- **Food** for a kid for a month: 23 €
- **Scholarship** in a private school for one year for one a child: 120 €
- **Complete care** of a child for 1 year: 625 €
- **Water needs** for 25 children for 1 month: 60 €
- **House rent** for 1 month : 180 €

Each and every euro gets much more value in Nepal! To help us:

Check: payable to Karya. Send it to:

KARYA,
57 Route de La Plaine,
74300 THYEZ, France.

Fund transfer: please contact Karya

Each year you will receive a tax receipt entitling you to a tax deduction.

Please visit our website, or contact us to have more information on our actions.

Thank you for your support!!!