

Hi guys,

I hope you are all keeping well, and are looking forward to the Christmas break! I am heading over to Nepal on 4th December until 20th December. Already there is two foot of snow in Humla, so if I get snowed in, I could be having a very white Christmas in the Himalayas!

I would like to welcome Frank Cronin on board as a new Director. Frank is the Managing Director of Setanta Media, which includes Setanta Sports, and brings strong financial acumen and good PR / media skills, which are vital for our work and profile. Thanks also to Brid Whelan, who continues to work hard as a director. Thanks to Beatrice Mbogo, who is one of our volunteers on general administration, and thanks to Kevin Higgins and Rachel Morrogh, who are working for me as volunteers on our branding and PR strategy for 2009!

On 26th November, I was in the Shelbourne to receive an award in the Ireland In "VOL" ved Awards, which are run by Volunteering Ireland. I qualify as a volunteer as I don't take any pay from the charity. I was one of three finalists in the International Development category.



UPDATE ON NEPAL

Things are progressing well in Nepal, and our work programme for the current year is on track. I will have a more detailed update on Nepal when I get back from my trip at Christmas, so our next newsletter will have lots of photos of our various projects and the families we help!

~ We have opened our third health post in Humla, in the village of Thehe, which is one of the poorest and largest villages in the district, and caters for an estimated 4,000 people. Until now, there has been no maternity care of any kind, nor has there been any medicine. We are supplying the health post with a full range of medicines, and have employed a midwife / nurse to deal with all female healthcare and maternity issues.

~ Work on the construction of the model vegetable farm, poultry sheds and greenhouses for the girl's hostel in Simikot is almost complete, and in the spring, they will start growing vegetables and breeding chickens, for sale in the market. They will use the profits to fund their education through secondary school.

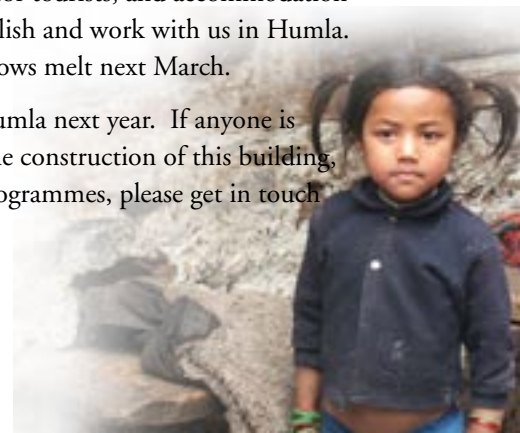
~ Work has also started with Bergaum women's co-op, initially with adult literacy classes and skills training. We have over 200 women who wish to start adult literacy classes, which is a fantastic uptake! We are also working with them to repair the Cully & Sully oil pressing machine. We are starting similar projects with another women's co-op in Syada village in Humla.

~ Construction has started on Thehe school, where we are giving the school management committee €5,000 to build three new classrooms, toilets, and a water supply.

~ We have also finished supplying copybooks and other essential supplies to six primary schools in the district, and are purchasing new supplies for distribution to the schools early in the New Year.

~ We are in the process of buying land in Simikot for our education centre. This building will comprise classrooms for teaching adults and children English, a children's English library, a café for tourists, and accommodation for volunteers who come over to teach English and work with us in Humla. We hope to start construction when the snows melt next March.

~ We will also start taking volunteers to Humla next year. If anyone is interested in being a volunteer, either on the construction of this building, or to teach English and help our on our programmes, please get in touch with me!



FUNDRAISING

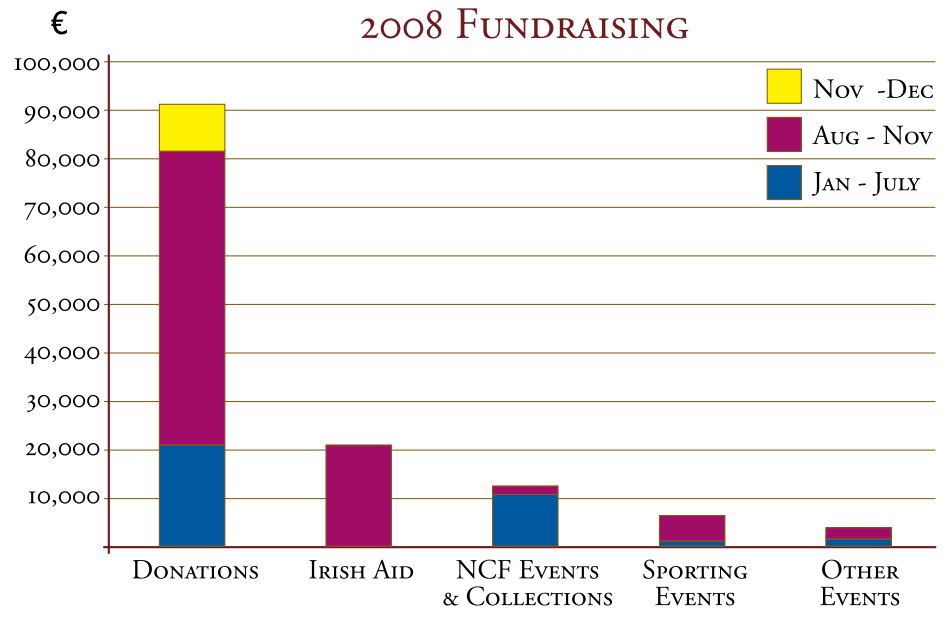
My main job is to raise the funds for the charity. When I last wrote to you all with our previous newsletter, I was very worried about our fundraising, and feeling a little over-whelmed. Things have really turned the corner since then. I expect that our income for the year will be in the region of €130,000, which is exactly on budget.

The blue relates to funds received at the time of the last newsletter, at the end of July. The purple relates to funds that have been received since then. The yellow is projected donations that I hope will come in between now and year end.

All of the large projects which we requested funding for on our



Volleyball in Nepal.



last newsletter have been funded by you, so thanks so much for your generosity! A former client of mine, who wishes to remain anonymous, donated €30,000 for the construction of our English language school, children's library and volunteer centre in Simikot. I am in discussions with another organisation who will hopefully donate all of the books and a lot of the teaching materials that we will require.

Kids from Thehe school, who are getting new classrooms, toilets and water thanks to KPMG Corporate Finance





The Walsh brothers at Mount Everest Base Camp.

Thanks to Keith Browne and KPMG Corporate Finance in Dublin, my old employers, who have donated €5,000 for the construction of the school in Thehe. They have saved €5,000 per year through a shared newspaper system, and have donated the savings to us, which is a great scheme – good for the environment, and good for the children of Nepal!

Thanks to the following people and companies who, since August,

have donated €500 or more: Anonymous Donors x 2, Anglo, Paddy Barry, Denis Coakley, CR2, D2 Property Management, Pilda Deasy, Mairead Gabbett, Fr Ciaran Holahan, Eoin & Ruth Likely, Gavin McGrath, Megazyme, NTR, Paddy Power plc, and Mrs Grace Semple. In the last three and a half months, we have received over €60,000 in donations.

We have also received the maximum €20,000 Irish Aid funding we were eligible for this year, which is an important milestone in accessing more substantial funding from them for 2009.

We raised a net €10,440 from our own functions and collections. Sadly, this would have been over €18,000 if we had not had to cancel the Dublin golf and trek to Nepal. Thanks to Mr & Mrs O'Donoghue who were a great help in organising the Salthill church gate collection in Galway, and to all the volunteers who shook buckets for me!

A number of people did various sports events for us and raised money. A big thanks to my cousin Mairead Deasy who ran the mini marathon, Ray Hayden who did the Sean Kelly 160km cycle, Jason Walsh who trekked to Mount Everest base camp, Julie Laurent who did a half marathon, Noel Ruane who did the Celtic Warrior Run, and Donagh Lynch who did the Dublin City Marathon. Together they raised €6,500!

A number of people organised other functions for us. Earlier in the year, we had a trad session, a school cake sale and a poker tournament. Since July, Deirdre Carter Roche and Karen Brett organised a Ceili Amor in Carlow, my cousin Mairead organised a piggy back race in Achill, Gillian Noonan organised a pub quiz in Cork, and an anonymous donor gave us a corporate table at the Galway Races which we sold off. Together, these events raised a total of just under €4,000 this year!

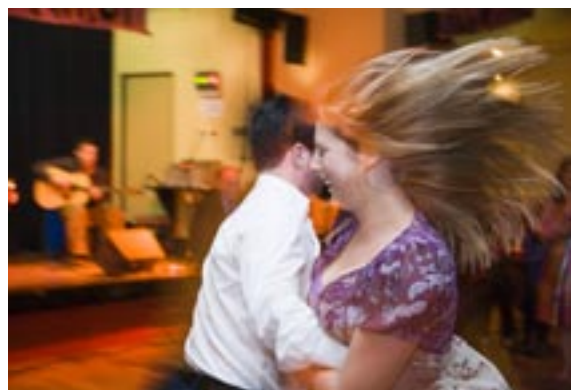
So a huge thank-you again to all of you for your continued support! And wishing you, and all those you love and who love you, a peaceful and joyful Christmas.

Lots of love

Ray Hayden on his bike.



At the Cork pub quiz organised by Gillian Noonan. Pictured L-R: Nicky, Gillian, her Mum and her sisters.



Ceili Amor.



Donagh Lynch who did the Dublin City Marathon.



AN END TO POVERTY?

The other thing I have been working on is trying to develop a model for our work, so that we can truly end poverty where we work. After a lot of research, I have found a very innovative and novel framework. This model has been trialled successfully in Africa since 2001, but we will be the first organisation to implement it in Asia. It is a five year programme that seeks to eradicate poverty and empower communities to become fully financially self-sufficient.

This model is called the Millennium Villages approach. This model was developed by the Earth Institute at Colombia University in New York, one of the leading centres of thought around sustainable development, headed up by Prof. Jeffrey Sachs (I recommend his book 'The End of Poverty' to anyone interested in overseas development).

As poverty is complex, it is necessary to approach things from a multi-sectoral angle. Drilling wells and giving people clean drinking water, for example, is great, but it doesn't put food in their stomachs. Likewise, giving people animals or other assets doesn't help where people's children are dying due to lack of healthcare. So this model is about dealing with ALL of the issues that people face, including agriculture, education, gender equality, healthcare, family planning, environmental conservation, forestry, energy, water and sanitation, enterprise development, micro finance and economic development, and institutional / democratic strengthening.

We plan to roll out this model in three villages in Humla in 2009, so my upcoming trip to Nepal will be to finalise the operational planning, staffing, and budgets for this.

As I am not paid for my work, I have every incentive to solve the problems and exit - success will be measured by my ability to put myself out of a job! Many people say to me that every year, they are asked to donate money to the same countries and the same problems, and they wonder if their money makes any real or lasting difference, or is this a bottomless pit? It seems extraordinary to me that, despite the ability of the developed world to solve the most complex of problems, from stem cell research and deconstructing the human genome, to recreating black holes in laboratories, why we still have not managed to find a way to bring about a sustainable end to poverty in developing countries? Despite huge financial investments and the work of charities and global organisations like the UN over many decades, why is it that there are still billions of people across the world who are living on incomes less than \$1 per day? Indeed, the gap has actually grown between rich and poor with each passing decade. Certainly, the root causes and solutions to chronic poverty are complex, but I don't believe it is beyond our ability to solve the problem.

Poverty breeds instability and disaffection, and these elements in turn frequently turn into conflict and war. If we wish to have a peaceful society, with global stability and an end to terrorism, this can only happen if we are committed to creating a just and equitable world. This means giving people the opportunity to work themselves out of poverty. It does not mean endless handouts. Development costs money, but it is an investment that is far less costly than military warfare, and unlike war, development brings happiness and a brighter future for everyone, both in the developing world and in the West.



Kids of Humla.



Teaching mothers about infant nutrition and weaning at Maila health post