

Hi guys,

I can't believe that Christmas is upon us already! In November, the first snowflakes fell in Humla, high in the Himalayas. Wishing you and your loved ones a Happy Christmas and a great 2010!



A typical village in Humla, where the average altitude is about 3,000m above sea level

Website

Our new website has just gone live!

An enormous amount of work has gone into this, so a huge thank you to Amber, Bernard and Shay for their exceptional effort in getting this together. And, a big thank you to Kevin for all his assistance with our marketing documents. We've just been shortlisted for the Marketing Institute West Region eMarketing Award, so this is a great honour! Check the new website out and read our regular blogs at www.foundation-nepal.org

Christmas Cards & Gifts

Make a difference this Christmas with gifts from Foundation Nepal.

As part of our fundraising efforts, we're selling beautiful Christmas cards and a great range of charity gifts, including educational materials for children, women's literacy training and healthcare. Find out more on the enclosed insert!



Life in Humla

Get an insight into life in Humla district, where we work.

There is no social welfare in Nepal – to feed your family, you either grow your own food, and/or buy it with cash that you earn. On average, food production in Humla is sufficient for only 3-4 months of the family's needs for the year. The average household's annual cash income is only enough to buy food for another 3 months of the year, so there is still only enough food for about 6 months. People subsist on one meal a day.

Women's workloads compound infant malnutrition

Where Foundation Nepal works, women are responsible for all household chores and do all the hard physical labour, not men. Women are responsible for all farming, which is back-breaking work as there is no mechanisation in Humla, and a huge amount of physical work must be done by hand, such as carrying water to water the crops, harvesting the crops by hand, and carrying the crops home from the fields for storage for the winter. Families are too poor to keep animals for these jobs. And before they can cook a meal, women must spend up to four hours carrying firewood and water long distances to their homes.

So, because of their low status and role in society, most women do about 16 hours of hard physical labour every day. Because women are under pressure to produce sons (daughters are a liability with the dowry system), they often give birth to 10 or more children and don't have access to family planning. And so, most women of child-bearing age are either pregnant, breast feeding or both while carrying this enormous physical workload, and eating just one meal a day.

As a result, babies are often born with a low birth weight. Within weeks of giving birth, women have to resume their workloads. This puts women's breast milk supplies under huge pressure, and many find that their milk dries up. So mothers have to



A mother and her malnourished baby in Thehe, Humla

watch their babies cry and cry with hunger, helpless and unable to feed them.

Aren't we lucky that we weren't born in Humla! Having had a baby myself, it would be unimaginable to ignore those cries, and not have any milk. I cannot imagine what it would be like to look down and see my baby getting thinner and weaker each day. No mother should have to endure that, and no baby should die this way.

In the face of such extreme poverty, it is little wonder that 65% of children in Humla suffer from malnutrition, and up to 30% die before their fifth birthday. Severe malnutrition causes mental retardation, reducing child brain development and stunting.

The Poverty Trap

When you are this poor, there is no cash available to buy better seed varieties, or fertiliser, or tools, or to upgrade your land with irrigation. There is no money for medicines, for family planning, for school supplies. No matter how hard women work, there is no way to escape the poverty trap and start to increase food production and household income. Because families can't afford to send their children to school, their children are also caught in this poverty trap.

Take the example of Bandana. She is the main provider for the 7 members in her household. They have 1/4 acre of dry, arid uphill land, a tiny terraced field cut into the side of the sheer mountain, which is hopelessly inadequate for feeding 8 people for a year. On top of all her farming and household duties, she works 8 hours a day sewing clothes, to try to earn a tiny cash income to buy food.



Bandana Pariyar

Giving a hand up, not a hand out

With simple, inexpensive programmes, we can change lives for these mothers, giving them the means to boost their food production and earn a cash income, and reducing the amount of hard physical labour they face each day. By giving these women a hand up, not a hand out, we help give them back their dignity and self-respect. And it means our programmes will continue to generate economic benefits long after we have left, creating a self-sufficient and prosperous community.

How We Help

The main focus of our programmes is food production, micro-business and micro-finance, and we work mainly with women's groups. We also provide healthcare and educational support. Here are some of our initiatives:

- We have been trialling improved seed varieties. This year we started with maize, one of the staple crops. The improved seeds gave a 60% increase in yield, so we will be distributing seed to all our beneficiaries next year and we are also trialling other improved crops for next year.

- We plan to build an irrigation system for one village each year. This, combined with fertilisers and our improved seeds, will dramatically boost food yields and largely end severe malnutrition.

- We develop programmes which have a dual benefit – food production and cash income. So our vegetable growing under plastic (like greenhouses) and poultry rearing projects are very effective. Women can supplement the family's diet with eggs and vegetables, and greatly improve nutrition, and then sell any surplus for cash.

- We provide family planning, and this year we trialled an implant which gives women 10 years of contraception. This has proved hugely popular with the women, who are free of the burden of endless pregnancies.

- We run women's literacy programmes to give the women basic reading and writing skills.

- We are also providing women with training and capital to set up micro-finance schemes, which will enable them to save and lend, and ultimately set up small businesses.

- We are also sending women off to advanced six-month training programmes outside of the district. For example, we hope to send Bandana off for an advanced tailoring programme. With these skills, she could charge far more for her work, and earn a lot more income for her children. This would give her the means to work her way out of the poverty trap. For families like Bandana's with very small land holdings,

Women working at one of our vegetable growing programmes



food production strategies alone are not sufficient to provide enough food for the family.

At the moment, we support 319 women and their families with food production programmes, covering some 2,500 people, and we hope to expand this again in 2010 by about 50%. There is huge demand for these programmes from the women, and we can only meet a tiny fraction of the demand with our current resources.

We also work with the local government to support four health posts, including maternity services, and we supply educational materials to eight primary schools, and we are finishing our extension to Thehe primary school. Next year, we hope to build a safe birthing centre in Thehe to give women a sanitary environment for childbirth (at present women must give birth in the cowshed, as childbirth is considered dirty, and is not permitted inside the home).



Children receiving educational materials



The new extension to Thehe primary school well under way



A child being treated at a Foundation Nepal health post

Visit our new website, www.foundation-nepal.org, to find out more about the challenges people face in Humla, and our programmes. You can help support any of these programmes by checking out our Christmas gift options (enclosed), making a donation or signing up for a monthly direct debit.

Fundraising

We need your financial support.

After Donagh was born in early June, I had planned to take three months maternity leave and start back on a part-time basis with the charity in September. However, with Irish Aid dealing a canon blow to the bulwark of my ship in May (the unexpected news that we would be getting zero financial support from them in 2009), all hands on deck have been necessary to plug the gap.

So, two weeks after Baby Donagh was born, Mama Deasy was working full time for the charity, still pro bono, whilst juggling the baby. I have taken no maternity leave at all as a result, just four weeks holidays.

Things are easier now that he is five months old, but I am working very long hours for the charity. Other overseas Irish charities get up to 75% of their programme costs funded by the government. We get zero, even though our programmes would also be getting 75% funding, were it not for the arbitrary way Irish Aid decided to allocate its budget cut-backs. I think we must be one of the few Irish charities who has to raise 100% of our budget from the general public. This has placed huge strains on me, particularly in the current economic environment, when our larger donors in previous years have not been able to support us at the same level this year. So please think about sending us a donation, or signing up a direct debit, or buying Christmas cards and gifts from us. We are very efficient, we keep our Irish overheads to a minimum, and our programmes really provide a long-term solution to extreme poverty, and a clear return on investment.

On a personal note, Baby Donagh is brilliant! He is a really sunny little character, very smiley and extraverted, and very contented, so I am extremely lucky that he has been so easy to care for!



Baby Donagh

Fundraising Events

A huge thanks to Mary O'Malley and the Thurles Nepal Fund, who raised €10,542 for us from various events, including Mary's 50th birthday party!



Receiving a cheque from Mary O'Malley with help from Susan Maher

Our annual church gate collection in Crumlin at the end of September was also a huge success, with €3,417 raised! Thanks so much to all our volunteer collectors, and to my Uncle John, who is Parish Priest at Crumlin and helped us so much on the day.

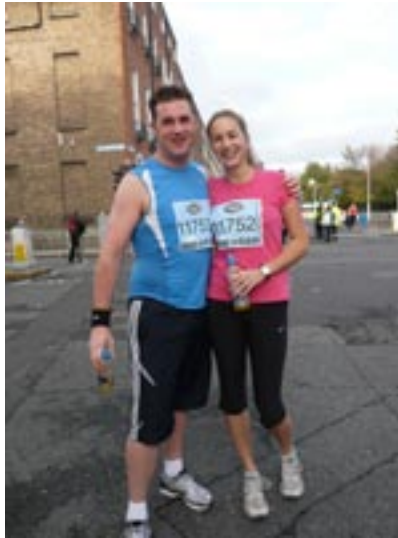


Church gate collection at St. Agnes' Church, Crumlin

Thanks to the Tom Sheridan's Golf Society in Knocknacarra, Galway. They had their annual golf outing at Athenry, and the raffle raised €695 for us! We plan to run a much bigger golf outing with them next Spring. A special thanks to Donal Barrett and Phil Watson for their support on this.

Tom Sheridan's Bar, Galway – annual golf outing in aid of Foundation Nepal

A big thanks to Joe Wade and the friends of Donagh Lynch who ran the Dublin marathon for us! Together, they have raised €7100.



Joe Wade and his sister Rachel taking part in the Dublin Marathon



Friends of Donagh Lynch the night before the Dublin Marathon

Thanks to Coláiste Iognáid ('The Jes') secondary school in Galway. We started a partnership with their transition year students this year, which has been a huge success. We ran an art competition and the winning painting is featured on one of our Christmas cards! The students have also been busy working as volunteers for our street collection, and helping out in the office with general administration.



Students from Coláiste Iognáid

Our annual street collection in Galway took place on 27th November, and we had almost 200 volunteers, including bucket shakers, face painters, jugglers, musicians, singers and dancers performing on Shop St. for the day, as well as a team of carpenters, sound engineers and roadies! A huge thanks to everyone who gave their time so generously. Despite the horrendous weather and the floods, €1933 was raised on the day!



Miriam braving the floods to shake a bucket for our annual Flag Day

