

Newsletter 1 2003

Hello to you!

The days are quiet...we are slowly, slowly building.

Preparations take a lot of time and of course I want to go faster than the Sikkimese pace....

Just a matter of accepting that things here have their own time and rhythm... We should have had our telephone connection already 4 weeks ago...still nothing.

"Tomorrow" can be the day after... next week....or next month.

We need a lot of wood to make beds and school furniture but the forest department in Sikkim is very strict about chopping wood (and that is why it is still so beautiful and green) so it is not easy to purchase. Then looking for carpenters and men to saw the wood.

But I have faith that we will be ready in time!

On the 6th of March we will receive the children so we are also in the process of selecting the students. That is not easy...

We want to provide opportunities for the most poor and backward children but sometimes parents come and visit to ask about admission of their child....but by the looks of their clothes and shoes (no flipflops...)you can already tell that they do have some money. Then it requires some 'tact' to make clear that they are "not poor enough".

The other day a man visited us from a nearby village. On his slippers and very simply dressed. He has a child that he'd like to admit in the school.

So we start to ask the usual questions....

"How old is the child"

"Is there an income in the family"

"How many children do you have....." And he answers...."sorha"! sixteen?

Did I really hear sixteen?

I start to doubt my knowledge of the nepali numbers.

So I ask again, with a big question mark on my face: "sorha"?

And indeed, it is sorha....16 children!! We are surprised....sixteen children and no income...how does he feed all those children?

Just to give you an idea...these are the families and children we are aiming at.....

Because we offer education and boarding for the most needy we do not want to ask the parents for a monthly schoolfee.

(In Holland we have a saying that you can not pluck feathers from a bald chicken....and that counts especially for Sikkim!)

But we do believe that if parents have to put some effort in it, something from themselves and have a bit of contribution, that they will value more what we have to offer.

So we do ask parents to do or give something for/to the school which could be giving some rice, some vegetables, some firewood or a chicken....Or people could offer labour: to help building, to work in the vegetable garden.

We give what we can: teaching, food , shelter and an inspiring

environment....and we hope people offer what is within their abilities.
This will create a certain balance....a healthy exchange of energy...a healthy
cooperation....Making use of resources that are available....making good use
of everybodies qualities so that everybody benefits.

Well, so far for what's going on in Sikkim.

Many blessings to you all!!

Hedwig