

NCEF GYAN

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NEPALESE CHILDREN'S EDUCATION FUND

What's Inside:

Highlights

Interview with Mr. Atul Pokharel

Children Helping Children



gyan: *n.* knowledge acquired
by direct perception

Scholarship Applications are in!

NCEF has received scholarship applications from all its regions. Kathmandu applications have been handed over to Mr. Gnawali, CE Board Member. Patan, Kavre and Nepalgunj applications have been sent electronically. Palpa applications were sent just before a political blockade.

The New Academic year starts in mid-April. The selection committee is currently in the process of evaluating applications.

For more information about selection criteria, selection committee, or sample of an application, please visit the following website:

<http://www.nepalchildren.org/about.html>

To read about current NCEF students, please visit the following website:

<http://www.nepalchildren.org/children.html>

NCEF Network Development: DC meeting

On March 9th, volunteers in DC met to increase NCEF's network in the United States. The meeting sought to improve and increase fundraising in the DC area. One proposal was to work with four universities in the area for organizing fundraising activities.

Calendar Project Postponed

Our plan to publish NCEF Calendar has been postponed for next year due to many problems. Please look forward to next year's calendar as the team works to bring a nice addition to your office desk or your home's wall. For more detailed information, please read "**Interview with Mr. Atul Pokharel,**" in the next page.



ABOUT NCEF

NCEF is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to develop the potential of disadvantaged Nepalese children through education. Need-based scholarships are provided to deserving students who would otherwise be unable to attend school. Our social workers in Nepal meet regularly with the selected children and their parents to assist in each child's development. We dedicate our resources to each NCEF child until they complete high school (twelfth grade).

GETTING INVOLVED

Why?

- To make a lasting difference in the lives of children.
- To be a part of an exciting team of interesting and dedicated volunteers.
- To put your spare time, no matter how little, to good use.

How?

- **Join** our announcements list!
- Help fundraise money for NCEF scholarships.
- Help with the administrative aspects of NCEF.
- Take part in discussions to ensure NCEF is increasingly effective.
- Help expand NCEF to new areas in Nepal
- Become a field volunteer in Nepal.
- Help lead NCEF by running for a position on the Board or Executive Committee.

SUBSCRIBE/UNSUBSCRIBE

To subscribe or unsubscribe the newsletter, please send a request email to subscribe@nepalchildren.org

NCEF PAMPHLET

Share information about NCEF with your friends with this [printable pamphlet](#).

Nepalese Children Education Fund (NCEF) is a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization. US Taxpayer ID: 51-0424140

An Interview with Mr. Atul Pokharel

Mr. Pokharel chairs the Fundraising Committee of the NCEF. Originally from Kupandole, Lalitpur, a city close to Kathmandu, he holds a BA degree in Mathematics from Princeton University (2005) and currently works as a researcher at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University. He enjoys travelling and being in environments and situations about which he knows nothing at all. His hobbies include writing emails!

Q. What motivated you to volunteer for the NCEF?

At the start, the reason was curiosity. I wanted to know if it was possible to change the lives of children in Nepal very radically. I wanted to know if it was possible to do this from so far away. It was proved after the second successful year of NCEF that it was possible. This made me think that the common saying was true: when people work together, anything is possible.

Overall, there are two things that motivate me to volunteer. The first is serving needy children in Nepal. The second is working with the other team members. They are incredibly dedicated and accomplished. It is a great learning experience for me.



Q. What experiences have been meaningful to you while working with the NCEF?

One experience I would like to share was my first meeting with a student at his makeshift house. His family was very poor. It is difficult to imagine. His father was addicted to drugs and had abandoned the family. We asked his mother why she wanted to send her son to school and she replied, "I do not want him to be like his father." She said this with great strength even though she looked very weak and hungry.

At this time, I knew something was wrong there. A mother wanted to save her child from a hellish life, she knew that education was the right solution. She wanted him to go to

school. But, she could not send him there. So the child was locked in to poverty because his parents. I was emotionally attached to one of the children, but our decision seemed fair. In this way I saw that NCEF is very powerful,

but it is also very weak. We cannot help every child that needs our help. So we must choose children who will gain from our help. We have a limited power, and sadly we can only help a very small number of children. However, we should be happy that we can help anyone at all. Our volunteers face this emotional challenge every year around this time so this experience helps me to appreciate their efforts.

Q. Describe your role as a fundraising committee chairman in fulfilling the overall mission of the NCEF.

The fundraising committee helps NCEF raise money and makes people familiar with NCEF and its goals. It was created when we saw that raising money needed special attention. The chairman of this committee is in charge of keeping it healthy overall. But sometimes, he or she will also have to do very basic things like check the NCEF mailbox, and write letters thanking donors. The chairman is responsible for helping members raise funds for NCEF.

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Q. How does fundraising committee work? How are the members involved through this committee?

The fundraising committee is very young. We are still searching for the best way to work as a team. The team is also changing constantly as volunteers become interested, and later lose interest or return to their own personal activities. The committee has a chairman and about four stable members right now. They discuss how to get the word out about NCEF and how to raise funds. Members also do their own projects. In the past, they have done things like showing a film or collecting bottles for recycling.

Over the past two years members have tried different things. Now with that experience we are learning what works well and what does not. I hope that this will help us to be more effective.

Q. What fundraising activities in the past have been the most fruitful?

It is important to remember that more than 90% of our funds come from friends and relatives of NCEF members. So this is a very important fundraising activity.

Members are trying out other activities also. As NCEF grows, we may also need to involve people who are not connected to NCEF already.

Every fundraising project has to be looked at from four angles. The first angle is money: how much did the project raise for NCEF? The second angle is participation: how many members participated in the project? The third angle is publicity: how many people learned about NCEF because of the project? The fourth angle is future use: can we do this project again in future?

There has not been a single project which has been successful from all angles. But there are some projects which were very successful from one or two of these angles. There have also been some projects which were not successful at all.

The project that raised the most is still ongoing. This project was proposed by a donor whose family member had passed away. In her name, she asked well wishers to donate to NCEF. We called this the memorial donation project. So far, this effort has raised about \$4,000. A similar project was done by Tom and Jill Kornack who were getting married. Their well wishers donated to NCEF as a gift to them. In all, they raised about \$2,500. You can read more about the second project in the January issue of this newsletter.

The project that involved the most members was the NCEF film showing at Princeton University. This involved six members working together. It introduced about 45 new people to NCEF but it only raised about \$50.

There is no magic formula. Every project has its strengths and weaknesses.

Q. What fundraising activities in the past have been the least fruitful?

The least fruitful projects are the ones that take a lot of time and energy but are never completed. They are not completed because of bad planning, or unforeseen events. The best example of such a failed project is the 2006 NCEF calendar. This project had three parts: collecting photographs of children, designing the calendar, and distributing the calendar. It was the most complex project that we attempted. Part 1 involved our coordinators in Nepal. Part 2 involved about five people in the US. Part 3 would have involved about thirty people.

In the planning stage, I had thought that four months would be enough to complete part 1 and 2. However, our first try at part 1 took four months! And it was not completed. This was due to unforeseen delays. In the end, we changed team leaders in Nepal to Mr. Basudev Gnawali (board member of our sister organization in Nepal). Under his initiative, part 1 was completed in one week.

By this time, the end of 2005 was approaching. It was mid December. Unfortunately, by then the team members for part 2 were too busy to give their time. We all had personal activities that had to be completed before the end of the year. It looked like the calendar would have to be cancelled.

We had already done a lot of work to gather the pictures. I thought that since the Nepalese New Year begins in April, we could make a calendar with Nepalese dates. Even though most people will already have 2006 calendars by April, I hoped that we could still distribute ours.

Inku, a new fundraising committee member, wanted to test my hope. So we both called people that we knew and asked if they would like a calendar or could distribute it to their friends. After this informal survey, it became very clear that my hope was false. The April calendar would never succeed. So it was cancelled.

Even though we had invested a lot of time and energy into the project it was not completed. The lesson here is: plan well!

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Of course, every cloud has a silver lining. So there are good things that came from this failed project. It was amazing how quickly we were able to get photographs of the children. This showed that we could really be very efficient, even when we were working at great distances. We have also learned how much work a project such as this one requires. This will help us plan well when we are ready to try again in the future.

Q. What new ideas has the committee developed for the future?

One great idea that has come up recently is to create a trust fund. We would collect a lot of money and put it in the bank. When the bank pays us a yearly interest, we would use this for the scholarship. It sounds like a great idea so we are exploring it.

The fundraising committee has many ideas. Many of these ideas also look promising. But, we lack the manpower to explore all of them. We are still learning how to work together efficiently. We are developing a plan for the next year or two, which will guide our energy.

I think that everyone on the fundraising committee would like to find the right strategy to fundraising. We will need to think about our vision and then build the team. This is what we are doing right now. It is important to remember that the fundraising committee is less than half as old as NCEF. It is still learning to walk. The next time you conduct this interview, I hope I will be able to give you concrete projects that we are aiming for.

Q. What particular improvements do you see are necessary in the committee or in the functioning of NCEF?

The committee is responsible for keeping up good relations with our friends and partners who have donated to NCEF. An important part of this relationship is responding to their emails in time. The chairman of the fundraising committee is responsible for this. At times the delay can be up to 10 days. In my opinion, this is unacceptable. So we will need to find a way to reduce the delay.

There will always be many things that can be improved in the functioning of NCEF. One of the reasons for NCEF's success so far is that we are always looking for ways to improve. As relates to fundraising, I would like to see two things happen. We will need to publish

financial reports soon. Although we keep detailed financial records, it takes a lot of effort to put it all together. I have been assured that we are trying our best to do this as I speak.

It will also be a positive step if we can find a way to make more of our home visit reports available to donors. From a fundraising perspective this will help us to engage our friends and partners. The children summaries in the newsletter have been a great help.

NCEF is already a very open organization. These are just some areas that we can open up a little more.

Q. General comment:

For the first few years, NCEF was an experiment. We did not know if it would succeed. It seems to me that by now we have some positive indications. First, an increasing number of children are applying for NCEF scholarships. This shows that what we are offering is still needed. Second, donors continue to support us. This shows that our supporters are still interested in what we are doing. It also shows that they trust us. Third, we are trying our approach in new areas. This indicates that we are still eager to help more children. Most importantly, inspiring new members are still joining our teams in Nepal and here. We are attracting talent.

Overall, as we become an important part of many people's lives, we will have to gradually broaden our perspectives. Let us begin to think of NCEF as a lifelong adventure that we are all taking part in.

Q. What improvement do you think will be helpful for volunteers and children in Nepal?

Well, perhaps this is a question best asked to the volunteers and children in Nepal.

Q. What other activities, besides NCEF, are you involved with?

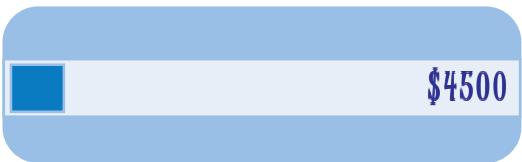
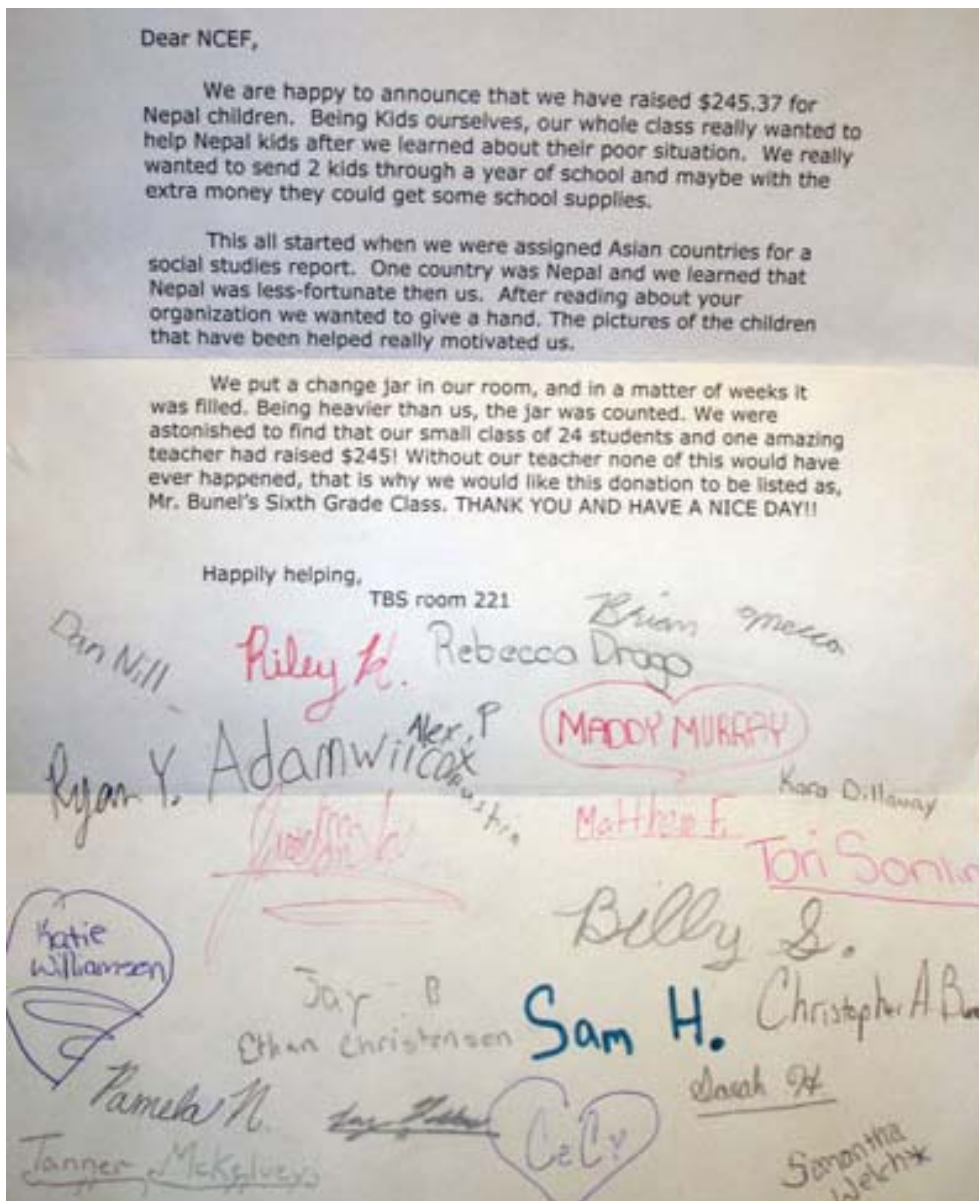
I am preparing for my departure in August, shipping books and other things to Nepal. If you had asked me a year ago, I would have said that I was busy finishing my undergraduate career. But at the moment, the main focus of my extra effort goes towards NCEF.

Children Helping Children

In February of 2006, NCEF received a generous gift accompanied by a touching letter from the students of Mr. Bunel's sixth grade class. Through their social studies project on Nepal, the class had learned about the situation of Nepali children who are unable to afford school. The class took the initiative to raise money so that they could help at least two Nepali children attend a year of school in Nepal through NCEF's program. They kept a change jar in their class and in few weeks managed to raise \$245.37. The class has requested this donation to be listed as 'Mr. Bunel's Sixth Grade Class' to recognize their teacher, Mr. Bunel. On behalf of the Nepali children these sixth graders have helped, NCEF thanks them for their amazing contribution.



Letter from Mr. Bunel's class -



MAKING DONATIONS

□ **Online:**

www.nepalchildren.org/donation.html

□ **Checks:**

Make checks payable to:

Nepalese Children Education Fund or NCEF

Mailing address:

Nepalese Children's Education Fund

P.O. Box 380061

Cambridge, MA 02238-0061

Questions?

Website: www.nepalchildren.org

Email: contact@nepalchildren.org

THANK YOU!