



Sunrise Children's Association Inc.
"Bringing a brighter future to the needy children of Nepal"



NEWSLETTER
Edition 5,
December 2007

Dear friends of Sunrise,

Firstly we would like to wish you all a very **MERRY CHRISTMAS!** We hope 2007 has been a very happy and rewarding year for you all. This year has been an **INCREDIBLE** year for us at Sunrise, with our move to our new Daisy compound in February, 28 new Sunrise children, regular volunteers and sponsor visits, visits from SCAI committee members and families, excursions to various culture programs, picnics and the zoo, and vaccinations. We also introduced our bi-monthly birthday parties, encouragement awards, reading program, sport and music programs, skill development and training programs and most recently our Sunrise Outreach Program. The children have made tremendous progress in all areas of their life, bringing us all never ending joy and fun!

Christmas at Sunrise

Christmas is generally not celebrated very widely in Nepal, however our children are looking forward to learning more about the meaning of Christmas and sharing in some local festivities with our staff, carers and two volunteers Miriam and Kumaran. Twelve of our oldest children have been invited to perform traditional Christmas Carols on the evening of the 24th at Le Meridian Golf and Spa Resort, with some of the proceeds from the night going to Sunrise. Carnegie Primary School in Melbourne and SCAI friend Sarah Connolly are also very kindly sending over some Christmas presents for the children which I am sure they will enjoy. This is the first stage in a new pen pal relationship between our Sunrise and the Carnegie children.

Tihar/Deepawali

Following the Dasain festival in October, the festivities continued in Nepal with the celebration of the second most important Hindu festival, **Tihar** in early November. Tihar, also known as Diwali or Deepawali, is a colourful festival of lights. The festival lasts for 5 days and honours certain animals, starting with rice offerings to the crows, which are sent by Yama, the 'god of death'. On the second day dogs are honoured with tika's and garlands of flowers. This was a considerable surprise to most Nepali dogs I am sure, who are often found in mangy condition living on the streets. It is believed that it is dogs that guide departed souls across the river of the dead so they must not be forgotten at this time.



Above: Some candles at Sunrise for Goddess Laxmi

The 3rd day Deepawali is the most important day of the festival when Lakshmi (goddess of wealth) comes to visit every home that has been suitably lit for her presence. No one likes to turn down a visit from the goddess of wealth and so homes throughout the country are brightly lit with candles and lamps, a stunning sight!



Above: Laxmi Rana with 2 of her "bhai's" Deepak and Raja

The fourth day is also the start of the New Year for the Newar people of the Kathmandu Valley. The fifth day is known as '**Bhai Tika**' (bhai=younger brother), and on this day sisters bless their brothers wishing them a long, healthy, happy life by placing colourful tika's on each others' foreheads. This was a very special day for our children, with all of the girls blessing their 51 brothers with a tika and fresh garland of flowers and the traditional offering of fruit and sweets. Our 51 boys then gave their sisters the traditional gift of money in return.

Visitors to Sunrise

On 17th November we were delighted to welcome the **Australian Elephant Polo Team** to Sunrise. The boys came over to compete in the World Elephant Polo Championships in Chitwan National Park held from 19th-23rd November. They had a fantastic time to say the least and ended up runners up to the local and very experienced Tiger Tops team. Well done team!

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Above: Rob Stuart, Jamie Boyd, Tulsi (Sunrise), Michael Loughman, Paul Cowper and Krisna (Sunrise).

The boys received a very special and warm welcome from the beautiful Sunrise children, dressed in traditional Nepali costume, and were entertained by our very talented dancers and singers.

After the musical performances the "Aussies" (the polo boys, myself and volunteer Peter) challenged the kids and carers to a volleyball match, and lost 2 out of 3! I was definitely the weak link in the team, and am glad that they had more success in the polo! The positive attitudes, skills and sportsmanship of our kids just never cease to amaze me!



Above: The Sunrise team that beat the Aussies!

Prior to their arrival the polo team very kindly raised some funds to put towards the land for Sunrise Children's Village and formally presented us with a huge cheque for \$10,000! Paul, Michael, Rob, Jamie, Cameron and everyone else involved, thank you very much again! Cameron Williams, member of the polo team and presenter on Nine's *The Today Show* then ran a piece on SCAI and the children on his return to Australia. We hope to be able to share this with you soon for those that didn't see it.

After sharing such a special day with the boys, we look forward to their potential visit again next year when they come to defend the title!



Above & below: Cousins Repa & Yaham with some of the gifts donated by Paul Cowper & KPMG



Other Visitors

Desiree Lesscher, a long time and much loved friend of Sunrise and SMNDA, visited us for a month in November. Desiree recently established the 'Sunrise Dutch Education Fund', with a mission to re-integrate abandoned children back into their communities where possible. Due to poor educational facilities in rural Nepal, and lack of financial resources, many families send their children to Kathmandu in the hope that their child will receive a better education, quality food, housing and care. We strongly believe that parental love is vitally important for a child's long term stability so through Desiree's program we are aiming to re-unite as many families as possible, both from within Sunrise and the wider community.

Brigitte Muir

For those of you that attended our fundraising dinner in Melbourne in October 2006 you would recall being entertained by the very inspirational Brigitte Muir. Brigitte was the first Australian woman to summit Mt Everest and the first Australian to climb the seven highest peaks in the world, and we were delighted to have her visit us at Sunrise!

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Christine Gee

Christine Gee the Consulate General of Nepal (Hon) for NSW and ACT visited us at Sunrise in early December. Christine, also a Director of the Australian Himalayan Foundation, has been an active supporter of SCAI since our inception in 2005. We highly value her friendship and ongoing support and look forward to working with her and the AHF team more closely in the future.

Sue and Charlie Soord

After a wonderful few weeks trekking, Sue and her husband Charlie spent a lovely afternoon with the children at Sunrise and very kindly brought the children some useful stationary and other items.

Sponsor visit

Rob Paton, sponsor of Ramesh Tamang came to stay for almost a month from late November. Rob was delighted to meet Ramesh and was pleased to see the toy camels he sent over a few months ago still enjoying the comforts of the children's bedrooms!



Above: Rob and Ramesh

Volunteers

Peter Polatis and **Taane Morris** joined us from Australia in late October and early November respectively. Peter enjoyed numerous volleyball games with the children and organised a round robin tournament of table tennis, soccer and volleyball involving almost all of the children. At the end of the tournament Peter presented the winning teams with some very impressive trophies which the children were of course delighted about!



Above: Peter on 'bhai tika'

Taane is a nursing student in Australia and has been very active whilst in Nepal, making the most of every opportunity! She has been volunteering at Kanthi Children's Hospital in the mornings, then returning to Sunrise to work with the children in the afternoons and evenings. Taane's help at Sunrise has been greatly appreciated by both the children and the carers, branching out to help with cleaning, washing and serving meals. Thank you Taane for your dedication.



Above: Taane on 'bhai tika'.

We would also like to welcome back **Kumaran Yogaranandan**. Kumaran was our first volunteer (December 2006) and has continued supporting us throughout 2007 with the sponsorship of 3 children, helping spread the word about our work and collecting some very useful goods for the children, as well as a few treats! Kumaran jumped straight back into Sunrise life, actively helping the children with their computing training and has put together a profile book of all the children. We are delighted to have Kumaran back with us this December for a month.

Miriam Bryson arrived in Nepal in mid December, and after doing some Nepali language lessons (which she eagerly began back in Australia) and sightseeing will stay with the children at Sunrise until 18th January. Miriam brought over some very useful educational materials on dental and other health issues, toothbrushes, toothpaste and other items kindly donated by Colgate in Australia which she will be using for training sessions for the children and carers. She is also planning on using her skills in therapeutic massage to work with the children.

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Above: Miriam and children at Sunrise

If anyone is interested in volunteering in Australia or Nepal, please contact Michaela michaela@scai.org.au. Helping improve the lives of these beautiful children is always an incredibly rewarding experience!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

On Saturday December 15th we held our bi-monthly birthday party for all children with birthdays in November and December. SCAI friends kindly sponsored the party. We all had a fantastic day as always, and again was the first time most of the children had ever enjoyed their own birthday party.



Above: Milan with some of his gifts

Extra-Curricular Activities

With the busy festival period over, the children have recommenced their weekly dance and music lessons. It is an absolute joy to watch them continually improve and share in their excitement. Some of the dancers are becoming quite the professionals! We hope to have some photos and short film clips up on the website for your enjoyment very soon. The older children are also progressing with their traditional Tibetan Thanka paintings and computer lessons.



Above: Lokendra and his Thanka painting

Kids Column

This month we would like to share with you some of the Christmas cards that the children made for their sponsors. The children love drawing in their spare time which keeps our Sunrise home beautifully decorated!



Above: Xmas cards by Laxmi, Lokendra, Binita, Sadhumaya and Sujata



Above: Hand print art by the children & Taane

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Sunrise Projects & Community Programs
Sunrise Outreach Program

Commencing in early November our 'Sunrise Outreach Team' made up of 14 of our most senior children took to the streets with a mission to help those less fortunate. We started with an easy and fun project, visiting another children's home called 'Shed the Light'. The focus of the day ended up being a friendly football match, then a visit to their home which was thoroughly enjoyed by all! Next week the children will be visiting an old age home to spend time with a delightful bunch of 'oldies' who have missed the opportunity to be with their own children or grandchildren. The elderly people of Nepal have so many interesting stories to tell, so I am sure our children, who are without their own grandparents, will also benefit greatly.

The children are involved in developing the program which will involve feeding, clothing and spending time with homeless people at temples, shanty towns and other needy members of the community. This will be implemented under the approval of the Child Welfare Board.



Above: The 'Sunrise Outreach Team'

Skill Development and Work Experience

You may recall from our last newsletter that we recently purchased 3 new computers, 3 sewing machines and Thangka painting materials thanks to a generous donation towards our skill development and training centre from Polycom. The children are becoming particularly proficient on the computers, whilst the sewing machines are being put to great use by the carers particularly, enabling them to keep the children's clothing well repaired!

Sunrise Children's Village (SCV)

The very generous donation from the Australian Elephant Polo Team has boosted our savings fund for SCV but we still have a long way to go!



If anyone is interested in donating on a monthly basis or as a once off, please contact Emma Taylor today!

Remember, every individual person can make a significant difference; small steps lead to large victories!

A BIG THANK YOU TO YOU ALL!

Last but certainly not least we would like to take this opportunity to formally acknowledge our wonderful sponsors and donors. Without your generous contribution we could not have made this dream a reality and changed the lives of 77 beautiful children.

We are incredibly proud of every one of our children, for their positive attitude, their amazing spirit and the never ending love they exude! Over this past year the children have achieved some major milestones in all areas of their lives, and none of this would have been possible if it wasn't for you! We sincerely wish to thank you all!

We hope you have all had a wonderful 2007 and we wish you a happy and fulfilling 2008.

Best wishes,

*Emma and the Sunrise Family
(Sangeeta, Sarah, Michaela, Urmila)*

