



BODHI Trains the Trainer Fact Sheet Deafness in Nepal

Sangeetha at 13



A Project in Memory

As of September, 2009, BODHI has provided US\$600 a year since 2006 to a train-the-trainer project in memory of our friends Dr Ken McConnell and Simon Brown, whose families requested that people make donations to BODHI rather than send flowers to their funerals.

The objective is to aim at increasing the literacy level and health awareness among speech and hearing impaired children in Nepal. The project started with one student, Sangeetha Basnet, in April, 2006. Dr Sonal Singh believes that it will be effective because there is a desire amongst the people to learn and know how to read and write. He does annual evaluations to ensure that the project is running smoothly.



Dec 07: Sangeetha Basnet (centre) with her mother Usha Basnet (left) and Ms Kiran Singh (right)

All photos Dr Sonal Singh

Photos 2008

Top: Sangeetha with her father

Middle: Sangeetha in class

Bottom: Sangeetha and Dr
Sonal Singh



Sangeetha Basnet is from a family in the village of Dolkha, Charikot, a hilly town about 90 miles east of Kathmandu towards Mount Everest. She became deaf at the age of 5 years, secondary to untreated typhoid infection. She is otherwise in good health.

She is the youngest of 10 siblings with seven sisters and 2 brothers. She stays in thmandu with her father, who works as a peon.

Sangeetha started school late, at the age of 9 years due to extreme poverty and is currently at the School for the Deaf in Kathmandu. In her class of 25, Sangeeta is among the top 5-10 students.

Dr Sonal Singh is Associate Professor at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He was originally from Darjeeling, India and has strong Nepali connections.



He writes: Nepal has thousands of speech and hearing impaired children. There are a few satellite schools for the deaf throughout the country, but none are as well equipped as the school for speech and hearing-impaired children in Naxal, Kathmandu. This school has 300 students from all over the country. It is the only such school which provides education up to 10th grade, and it runs a residential programme for children who mostly live in privately run hostels. Most of the children are from rural villages, and most drop out as they are unable to afford the cost of education and urban lodging.' Dr Singh says, 'We will try to ensure that they complete at least the elementary level education up to class 10th (the highest level of education possible for hearing impaired children in Nepal) [and] that they receive adequate health training as a part of the curriculum with the intention that they adapt and share this with their communities when they go back home.

The results of this project can be used as a pilot for other projects. Subsequently we plan to survey the rural and mountainous regions of the country to establish the causes and prevalence of deafness. We will involve the children graduating from the program and their community of other hearing impaired children in this phase of the project.

January, 2009

Dr Sonal Singh writes: Our general feeling was that by providing BODHI's support for this early phase, we would motivate Sangeetha to pursue some career in health such as training as Auxillary Health worker - which would be useful for herself as well as the community and equip her to carry out such additional training in her community in the village. I am confident that the program has raised health awareness among her as well as among her peers.

I also caught up on Sangeetha's progress. She did very well in her finals and I will send you a copy of her final results. Currently she is still in school but is a day scholar and we have arranged for her to stay with one of her relatives and attend school as a day scholar. She maintains a keen interest in health issues (hand hygiene etc) but is also interested in learning computers which is always a good sign. We are trying to ensure that she completes her entire education that is available in Nepal for the deaf at the School for the Deaf.



Children at the School for the Deaf, Naxal, Kathmandu, Nepal



PROJECT TITLE

**Educational project to improve literacy and health and sanitation among speech
and hearing impaired people in Nepal**

CATEGORY

Educational and health literacy project

PROGRAM MANAGERS

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Nepal is a small Himalayan kingdom sandwiched between India and China. With a population of 25 million, of whom 90% live in rural areas, it ranks as one of the poorest countries in the world. In 2001 Nepal's gross domestic product (GDP) was US\$236 per capita, and nearly two-fifths of the population lived on less than a dollar a day. The socioeconomic situation has been worsening since 1996 under the stress of frequent natural disasters and political conflict.

Nearly 3% of the Nepalese population suffers from severe disability with hearing impairment the No. 1 disability in Nepal with 33% of disabled person being hearing impaired. The people of Nepal are mostly religious but sometimes view deafness as a punishment for sin. While this attitude is still strong, but it may be changing among deaf people themselves-and they are working to change the opinion of their families, friends, and neighbors. The greatest barrier to this change lies in their access to education.

Nepal has thousands of speech and hearing impaired children. There are a few satellite schools for the deaf throughout the country, but none as equipped as the one for speech and hearing-impaired children in Naxal, Kathmandu, Nepal. *(Image 1)* The School for the Deaf, the oldest of its kind in the country was started in 1966 with 4 students and today has nearly 300 deaf students from all over the country. It is the only school, which provides education upto 10th grade and runs a residential programme for children mostly

in private run hostels. While the school makes every effort to recruit and retain children most of the children from the rural villages and mountains drop out as they are unable to afford the cost of education.

As a part of the project girls and boys from the mountains and rural areas would be recruited. We would try to ensure that they complete at least the elementary level education upto class 10th (the highest level of education possible for hearing impaired children in Nepal) so that they can integrate into the community.

HEALTH AND LITERACY

While there is no formal health-training program available in Nepal for these children, the school does basic training in health and sanitation as a part of their curriculum .We will ensure that they receive adequate health training as a part of the curriculum that they can adopt and share with their communities when they go back home.

We will also arrange for periodic educational health seminars where other health professionals/Auxillary Health workers can provide education and training so that these children carry out what they have learnt in the community. Most of these children end up teaching other impaired children. More and more deaf people are reaching out to other deaf people. Their goal is to establish a sense of community and worth, and promote a national sign language.

OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUT

This is not a research project but an educational one. The single objective at present is to aim at increasing the literacy level and health awareness among speech and hearing impaired children in Nepal.

It can be research in the sense that the results of this project can be used as a pilot for other projects. Subsequently we plan to survey the rural and mountainous regions of the country to establish the causes (secondary to untreated Acute Respiratory Infections) and prevalence of deafness. We will involve the children graduating from the program and their community of other hearing impaired children in this phase of the project.

COMMENCEMENT DATE:

Project will start with one student in April 2006. First aim is to ensure that at least one student completes the entire curriculum.

EVALUATION

It will be effective because there is a desire amongst the people to learn and know how to read and write. Sonal Singh will do annual evaluations to ensure that the project is running smoothly

BUDGET

Cost of housing/Education/Food for one boarder at the school	3000 per month (NRS)
Annual cost (10 months of the year) for one boarder.	$10 \times 3500 = 35,000$
New admission cost	5000 NRS
Total cost of one boarder for the entire curriculum over (10 years)	$(35,000 \times 9) + (40,000 \times 1) = 355,000$ NRS

Cost of bi-annual health seminar	10,000
Health educational materials annually	5000

The program managers

Kiran Sinha has several decades of experience with these children and is well known in the community for her selfless service to these children. She has trained at Glasgow University in the UK and is the recipient of several national awards for her teaching and community service in this area.

Sonal Singh is a Nepalese physician currently pursuing a Masters in Public Health at Johns Hopkins and teaching residents at Wake Forest University. He has several years of experience of working in developing countries like India, Nepal and the US. He is currently involved in several health and educational projects in SE Asia.

**CHILDREN AT THE SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF, NAXAL, KATHMANDU,
NEPAL**

