

Linh Son Update

by Liesel Briggs

It's been a cold and sometimes bitter winter in Nepal. However, the orphans at the Linh Son Children's Home are still smiling as they've got more educational space, a better kitchen area, warm sleeping rooms, a library room and the support and love you give them is unparalleled to anything else that has happened in their lives.

Linh Son Children's Home and School Committee has had a tough time since the Chairman Shankar Gautam was in a vehicle accident in January. Now you likely know he has one leg due to a bus accident a couple of years ago. At that time he was riding his scooter. More recently he was riding his three-wheel scooter when some children on bicycles rode into him. He upset and broke his ankle on his "good" leg. The result is bed rest for three months. Shankar is a medical doctor in the villages and people come from great distances to see him, so this will be hard on the villagers, as well as hard on him and his family. Meanwhile, the head of the Linh Son Children's Home is away in Viet Nam. Shankar is managing everything from his bed at home. He has sent me text messages updating the children's progress. He says he finds this stressful to not be able to up and working, however it has provided time for him to do work he generally cannot take time for.



No school busses here. Linh Son students wait for a standing room only public bus that may include a monkey as a passenger and rice or building supplies as baggage on top of or inside the bus.

Shankar wrote proudly that Samjhana Pangen, one of the Children's Home orphans passed level 11 exams and is now attending Sunshine College some 15 km away. She will be able to get her last two levels at the college.

This is an additional expense for her and I have committed some money to assist her

for two years. The total cost for her is 7200 Nepal Rupees, which at this weeks exchange rate is \$112.27. This money was donated by your Kids Helping Kids Club.

In January, 2009 \$500 (less transit fee) was sent to the Children's Home. Of that total, \$112.27 paid for Samjhana for one year of education. The balance went to the orphans at

the Children's Home for food, education expenses and any incidental clothing needs. In March I'll be sending the next payment. To date: \$2,650 have been sent.

In email discussions with the Head of the Linh Son Children's Home – TL Quang, he wrote to say that he hopes to expand the library. The downside is that they may shut down the nursery school. It has grown to huge proportions – 65 little tots and more – in one class. It is too much for the one teacher!! They have had absolutely no space for toys (and no toys or educational materials). The nursery class instruction has consisted of repetition of rhymes and rules and the alphabet. TL Quang cannot see how this can continue, so he feels it would be better to upgrade one area only and not try to do everything.

The older children still do not have a chemistry set-up, even though they study chemistry. It's as difficult as the computer class where you learn a lot of computer language but only have a few moments on an archaic computer (if there's electricity). There is much to do. Here in the West we'd be putting in a generator. However, then there would be the issue of obtaining sufficient fuel and then guarding the fuel and the generator!

The ball the children of Mayo sent has likely been played to its limit. Next time I think it would be great to take a couple of balls and a number

of skipping ropes, the game of jacks and some of those "back-packer" frisbees! But that's for the future.

Right now, everyone is doing the best they can under the government system. What is lucky is that this orphanage with school attached is public and not private, so there is no danger of being shut down by the Maoist government. They have a committee and parents sit on the committee. One of the aims of the government is to shut down private schools – hopefully Sunshine School which Samjhana attends will not be hit in the near future. Another aim of the government is a three month drive to make everyone literate. Exactly how they wish to accomplish this is unknown.

The people of Nepal have immense fortitude and patience. They plow their fields and cut the sugar cane, haul water from the wells or rivers and try for as normal a life as is possible.

The reality of life under a Maoist system - now renamed Unified Communist Party of Nepal is lack of electricity (only 8 hours per day), fewer jobs, and possible factory closures. There are constant threats and assaults on freedom of the press and actual attacks on journalists. Recently a woman journalist was killed. Meanwhile the army is trying to recruit to fill vacancies, and a political system that vowed to be consensual is now threatening the peace process due to actions of Maoist cadres who do not respect any laws that have been laid now in the drafting of a new constitution. What is amazing is the immense patience by the Nepali people. They attempt to bridge differences and danger with dialogue. They are truly focused on building a better future, if only given the opportunity. Their demand, their vision is peace.



Eight hours of electricity a day means most reading and school work happens out doors until sunset and then by candle light or flash light.