



Proposal for Support of the Maya Foundation in Nepal

Submitted to the Mountain Fund

**Maya Foundation,
Meijhorst 34-45,
6537JC Nijmegen
Netherlands**

**www.stichting-maya.nl
info@stichting-maya.nl**

**Request for Funding for the construction of
the Serachour Early Childhood Education Training Centre**

US\$ 18.750,-

**René Voss
Founder – Maya Foundation
rene@stichting-maya.nl**

Description of the Organization

The Maya Foundation is a non-profit, non-governmental organization providing care and education to children in rural Nepal since 2004. We believe that good quality education to preschool children in the poor rural areas will help them to get a better start in life. Also, changes in the education system in Nepal at large have a better chance to be successful if they are implemented at the bottom and then work their way up.

The Maya Foundation's vision is to give the Nepali people, through the gift of education, the possibilities to help themselves.

- The Maya Foundation was registered in September of 2004 in the Netherlands as a non-profit organization.
- In November of 2005 the Maya Foundation received an honorable mention from the Nepalese Ministry of Education for its work in upgrading an existent nursery class in a rural area in Nepal to modern standards.
- In November of 2006 the Maya Foundation started the Rural Education Development Program, its daughter organization at grassroots level, registered in Nepal with the Social Welfare Council.

Mission

Our mission is to address the need of the Nepalese rural communities at the level of education and childcare. We seek to strengthen capacity for self-help through education by:

- Introducing the concept of kindergarten and nursery classes in rural areas
- Building and equipping early childhood education class rooms
- Teaching job skills to parents to be able to create educational materials
- Hiring these parents in a workshop where they actually manufacture the educational materials
- Providing these educational materials to the early childhood centres free of charge
- Training teachers on how to use these materials to the fullest potential
- Training teachers on how to help the children grow through play-methods in stead of drill techniques
- Focusing on strong teacher – child relationships
- Encouraging personal exploration within children
- Helping to build confidence and a desire to learn within children

Kindergarten and nursery classes help build strong relationships between children and their teachers. Relationships that will give these children the safe environment they need to be at ease and explore life as well as themselves. They need to be encouraged to explore the world around them at an early age to become fully developed beings. Rather than being told by teachers about the world, they need to learn to go and discover things for themselves. It will give them self-confidence and the skills they need later on in life. It will also serve as an anchor in a changing world, because even in rural Nepal life is changing. In addition to the child – teacher relationship we also need comfortable and safe classrooms as well as adequate educational materials for these children.

Here are the 3 pillars on which we focus and in which we want to invest as much as possible:

1. macro infrastructure: pre-school centers in communities throughout the Harpan valley
2. micro infrastructure: educational materials for all these preschool children
3. personal infrastructure: strong teacher – child relationships through teacher trainings

Vision

Maya envisions a Nepal where people get a real chance to rise above the poverty line, where people can break out of the circle of poverty and lead a humane life. But Maya also envisions a Nepal where people have the strength to become individuals within the group in stead of being merely sheep in the herd. A Nepal where people learn how to think, dare to think, dare to believe in themselves and to be positive about their lives—even if they live in one of the poorest countries on earth.

Contact with local organizations

Development projects can only be successful if the local community is directly involved. The Maya Foundation always works closely together with local organizations to ensure local involvement. On this particular project we work with the *Rural Education Development Centre* (REDC). See www.redcnepal.org for more info.

Direct contact: guidance and verification

Maya has since its beginning in 2004 the privilege to have a Dutch coordinator who lives 9 months out of the year in Nepal and who works fulltime (though on a voluntary basis) to guide the projects of the Maya Foundation. The coordinator lives with a Nepali family in Serachour village and has been part of the community for 4 years now. He thus knows the local people and the local conditions: ingredients that are quintessential for any project!

The coordinator works without payment, which guarantees that a maximum of the money donated will go directly to those who need it most: the children of Nepal. The coordinator is also the one who personally verifies all expenses. Maya does not give large sums of money to the local community, to local organizations or to the schools involved.

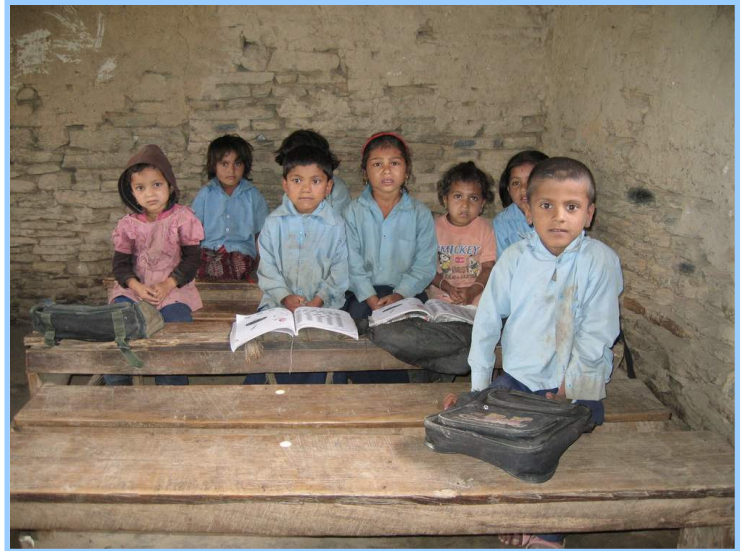
Statement of need for Nepal

1. Education in Nepal

The government in Nepal has only been active in the field of education for the past 50 years. Its focus is still on school buildings. Teachers, supplies and the quality of teaching are largely outside the scope of the government's policy.¹

In Nepal, education in the rural areas still and foremost takes the form of rote learning. The teacher talks (usually with a loud voice; therefore *to scream* better describes the vocal activity of a Nepali teacher) and the children listen. The teachers try to drill knowledge into young brains, with the help of a bamboo stick if needed.

There are no teaching materials whatsoever; there is no learning through playing or learning through doing; there are no activities, neither single nor in small groups; there is no stage in the learning process of practicing or producing anything with the knowledge acquired. Today, in rural Nepal, the approach is clearly teacher oriented.



Our vision, at the Maya Foundation, is child oriented; we look at education through the eyes of the child. Children need an affectionate and inspiring environment in which they can develop fully and become who they really are—beautiful children of Mother Earth.

2. Global context of the need for Early Childhood Education

In 1990, 155 countries drafted the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA). Almost two decades ago, the importance of early childhood education was already stated. Unfortunately, in the rural areas of Nepal, not much was really done about it.²

It wasn't until the beginning of 2006 that UNESCO, through its daughter organization IIEP, finally gave full attention to it:

¹ In the Nepalese context the program Education For All (EFA) means that the government has to focus on constructing school buildings in rural Nepal where no school buildings were before: just to be able to bring a school near enough to the children. Due to the nature of the terrain in Nepal this is proving to be quite a challenge. Thus no resources remain to focus on the quality of the education inside the walls of these buildings.

² Article 5 reads: "Learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programs, as appropriate." See http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/background/jomtien_declaration.shtml

If the vicious cycle of inequality is to be broken, then child care and education have to start very early, before primary school. In most developing countries, early childhood education is restricted to urban middle-class children. Children from rural areas and low-income families not only are denied access to this kind of education, but they enter primary school later than other children. If inequalities are to be reduced, and if education is to benefit disadvantaged children, much more attention has to be given to providing early childhood care and education [...] for the poor.³

And while it is great to finally have recognition for it, what children really need in rural Nepal today is the actual nursery class, free of charge, with the actual teachers and the actual teaching materials to bring it into their daily lives and to make it all happen. Talking is fine for policy makers, but children living under poor conditions need actions, not words.

3. Grassroots actions: The Maya Foundation

The Maya Foundation is doing just that: opening up early childhood centers in rural Nepal. In 2004 it opened its first center--in the form of a single nursery playgroup--in a small village in the foothills of the Annapurnas. As it was very popular with the local people from the start, it has welcomed many preschool children. In 2005 it received an honorable mention from the Nepali Ministry of Education. In the same year we started a



workshop where local people craft educational materials that otherwise we would not be able to get hold of in Nepal. Obviously we are on the right track.

All we want now is to continue constructing and equipping more early childhood centers, training more nursery class teachers, bringing more educational materials within reach of the children in these rural areas. Because these children deserve our care and attention. To be able to do this, however, we also need support! Only together can we make the difference!

³ IIEP Newsletter January-March 2006.

Strategy for the Early Childhood Education Center in Serachour village

Introduction

Serachour village is a farming community of around 600 inhabitants situated 25 km west of the city of Pokhara in the foothills of the Himalayas. The village consists of just over a hundred households and has 2 temples, 2 rice mills and 2 very small shops—all clustered together on a small flat hilltop surrounded by steep slopes.⁴ It is in this village that, back in 1999, community members showed their progressive character in establishing one of Nepal's first community schools. The village is also home to both the Maya Foundation Nepal and the REDC (Rural Education Development Center), whose members stood at the base of the successful transformation of a regular nursery class into a modern playgroup. Both organizations are key players in the field of the improvement of rural education in this area of Nepal.

Present state

At present, the local village school in Serachour is spread out over 2 buildings: an old building erected in the early seventies and a relatively new building. The 3 preschool classrooms are located in the new building, along with classes 1 through 5.⁵ The other building houses class 6-8.⁶ The community would like to unite classes 1-8 in the new building and tear down the old building since it is now 35 years old. This older building is made up of natural stone and mud and has 2 floors. It is in a very poor condition indeed and has become unfit for modern-day teaching due to its small, dark, humid rooms. It is true that it has reached an age where tearing it down is justified even if we only consider matters like security and health. However, this would leave the preschool children "school-less". As an answer to that situation we would like to reconstruct a new building at the same location but by using new construction materials and by taking modern aspects into account. Those include larger classrooms allowing a setting in which children can play and discover, more and larger windows allowing more daylight to enter the rooms, a closed off but spacious playground, and toilets adapted to children of preschool age⁷—to mention but the most eminent features.



The old building, constructed in 1972.



The newer building. Notice the children sitting right on the cliff!

⁴ See hand drawn map attachment 2.

⁵ In Nepal classes 1 to 5 constitute elementary or primary school.

⁶ i.e.: lower secondary school according to the Nepali school system.

⁷ Nepal has what are referred to as 'squat toilets', also known as French toilets, i.e. a hole in the ground with two footprints next to it. For very young children the size of the hole is too large to be able to squat over.

The newer building is located at the edge of the village, right on top of an impressive cliff, whereas the old building is more centrally located—very close to the east west axis of the village—and situated on flat ground. Obviously, the location of the old building is, by far, more favorable to accommodate preschool children than the present location. The move, therefore, seems justified by all means.

Planned future state

If we indeed take the opportunity to house the preschool in a separate location, we should use this new situation to include a **health post** so it can become a day care centre. At present there is no health post in the village. There used to be a health worker who performed first aid to locals but she moved to the city in March 2007.

We should use the new setting with its modern features as a model preschool, a model for other schools in the district. We would like to use the possibility to turn this preschool into what we could call a preschool or **early childhood education training centre** (ECETC).

We can easily do this by adding a single classroom that will operate as **training hall** where (future) teachers can come and learn about the new way of teaching and about the importance of the new setting, of the new classroom and classroom-environment. We then have a situation in which new teachers or existing teachers can come and be instructed both theoretically and practically, since we would literally have the actual modern preschool at the training hall's doorstep.

Another element that should be incorporated in the education center is **the workshop** that has been creating the preschool's educational materials since more than 18 months now. Undeniably avant-garde for the region and indeed the country at large, this promising workshop is up until today unfortunately housed in the courtyard of one of its employees. By giving it a more prominent location and access to better facilities, we would undoubtedly give it a better future. Besides, it would enrich the education center enormously if (student) teachers or indeed the public at large would be able to see what the workshop is producing and how it is being produced. Finally, we would enhance the spread of the use of the educational materials, thus benefiting more children—which is the ultimate purpose of the workshop to begin with.



In addition, we want to include **the offices of the REDC and MAYA** since both organizations are working towards the improvement of rural education. MAYA has been at the base of the success of the present preschool and the REDC is a more recent but not less energetic player in the field of educational development and operates as the local platform on grassroots level. Both parties are very interested in taking up offices in the new complex as a fixed office on such an outstanding location would literally put them in view of the community and would thus extend their network. The rent that these organizations pay would help cover the running costs as well as the costs for the upkeep of the building. It would thus open the prospect of hiring a janitor: an option that most likely would not be open to the simple preschool.

We are also considering placing **lockers** in the training hall so that the hall can be rented out to community groups on different occasions—or on fixed evenings during the week for example—since they would each have their own locker. This would increase the income and thus the sustainability of the center even more.

Finally, there is the option of having a **shop** specialized in school items. We then open the centre to the community at large. A shop is in some ways like the village tap; a place where everyone comes regularly, a place where people exchange information, a place to get the latest news—preferably the latest news on community development. It is also a very safe source of income to add to the sustainability: a central place to have a shop in the village means that many potential shopkeepers will be interested in renting it. Of course all of these complementary rooms would have their own entrance, away from the preschool or the preschool playground. To adults, both parts of the education centre would clearly compose one unit but the children would only experience the preschool side of it. In no way should the children suffer negative side effects of having other facilities within the same complex—that includes a workshop where people hammer or use power tools. For this, special measures must be taken.

By expanding the preschool into an education development center including offices of local organizations, the health post, the workshop and the shop, we will directly involve the local community, thereby creating an opening into the mind of this particular community and eventually maybe even a change in mindset of communities in general in rural Nepal. By including the option of a community room we invite even more people to come and thus come into contact with community development. In the end then, we can safely say that this kind of center will involve almost all of the individual members of the community; it can therefore count on a broad basis of support and thus have every chance of being successful in its purpose.

The village of Serachour has only very recently (March 2007) been connected to Nepal's main road system by means of a motorable road. This means that at this point in time it is actually feasible to bring in the building materials needed for our project whereas before it would have been almost impossible. The newly built road also makes the center easily accessible to the larger public, even though it is located in a rural area.

Implementation

As the building will be constructed on the exact same site that now accommodates the lower secondary school building we do not need to take any action regarding the land: the plot is now community owned and can remain so as that perfectly suits our needs. However, we have to tear down the existing structure and erect a new one. Also, we should take out the slate stones that now form the schoolyard and replace them with grass to create a more child friendly and safe playground area.

On the ground floor the building will house the preschool (3 rooms) including the children's toilets, the health post and the shared kitchen and toilets. The second floor will house the training hall / community room, the offices for rent (2 rooms) and the room (including outside platform) for the educational workshop, as well as a shared kitchen and again toilets.

Community involvement

As with all development projects: Long-term results can only be guaranteed if the local community is involved in the process at all stages. The School Management Committee (made up of local people only) has already promised that the local community will lend the manpower needed to break down the current structure and to prepare the site for the new building. It will also carry in the new building materials, dig the soil to be able to lay the foundations, and help in construction as much as possible.

Sustainability

Sustainability refers to the fact if the center will be able to keep functioning in the future in the way it was designed for; once the sponsors have given the financial aid and once the building has been constructed. The center will need a minimum of income to cover the running costs like electricity, replacing light bulbs, maintaining the water supply in good condition, repainting the woodwork once a year, repainting the building's walls once every 2 years, and a janitor's salary. These costs are estimated at a maximum of 4000 rupees a month.

That means the center has to raise at least 4000 rupees a month in income to cover these costs and to give it a sound financial basis. Our calculations below show that the expected income will be anywhere in between 3000 and 5000 rupees a month.

Rent 1 room on monthly basis (but on yearly contract) to MAYA for office activities (MAYA at present does not have an office at Serachour village.)	1000
Rent 1 room on monthly basis (but on yearly contract) to REDC for office activities (maybe shared with the upcoming Micro Credit Bank, also for office activities)	1000
Rent 1 room on a monthly basis to a shopkeeper to sell school supplies.	1000
Rent out 1 community room for special occasions	variable
Rent out 5 to 10 lockers in community room on monthly basis (but on yearly contract) to HWRDC / youth club / clothing bank / women's group / etc.	Max 2000
total	3000-5000

Room rent

One room = 1000 rps per month, this includes electricity, use of toilets and kitchen⁸

Locker rent

One locker = 100 rps per month, this includes use of the community room one evening every 2 weeks OR

One locker = 200 rps per month, this includes use of community room one evening every week.

Conclusion

It is with this comprehensive vision that the Maya Foundation will build the early childhood education training center, with a micro view that each child needs individual care and attention, and a macro view that by helping develop the education system we are giving the Nepalese people a better chance in the future.

⁸ As is usually the case in rural Nepal, drinking water in the village of Serachour is free of charge.

Board of Directors

Maya Foundation's board of directors consists of three people, all volunteers.

Jan Kruijt – President

Winkelakker 7, 9472 VK Zuidlaren, the Netherlands.

jan@stichting-maya.nl

Angelique Zaki – Treasurer

Meijhorst 34-35, 6537 JC Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

angelique@stichting-maya.nl

Tamara Maerschallck – Secretary

Brasel 47, 2480 Dessel, Belgium

tamara@stichting-maya.nl

Coordinator

The coordinator who has been living with the local community since the summer of 2003:

René Voss

c/o Chudamani Adhikari

Dhikur Pokhari – VDC 9

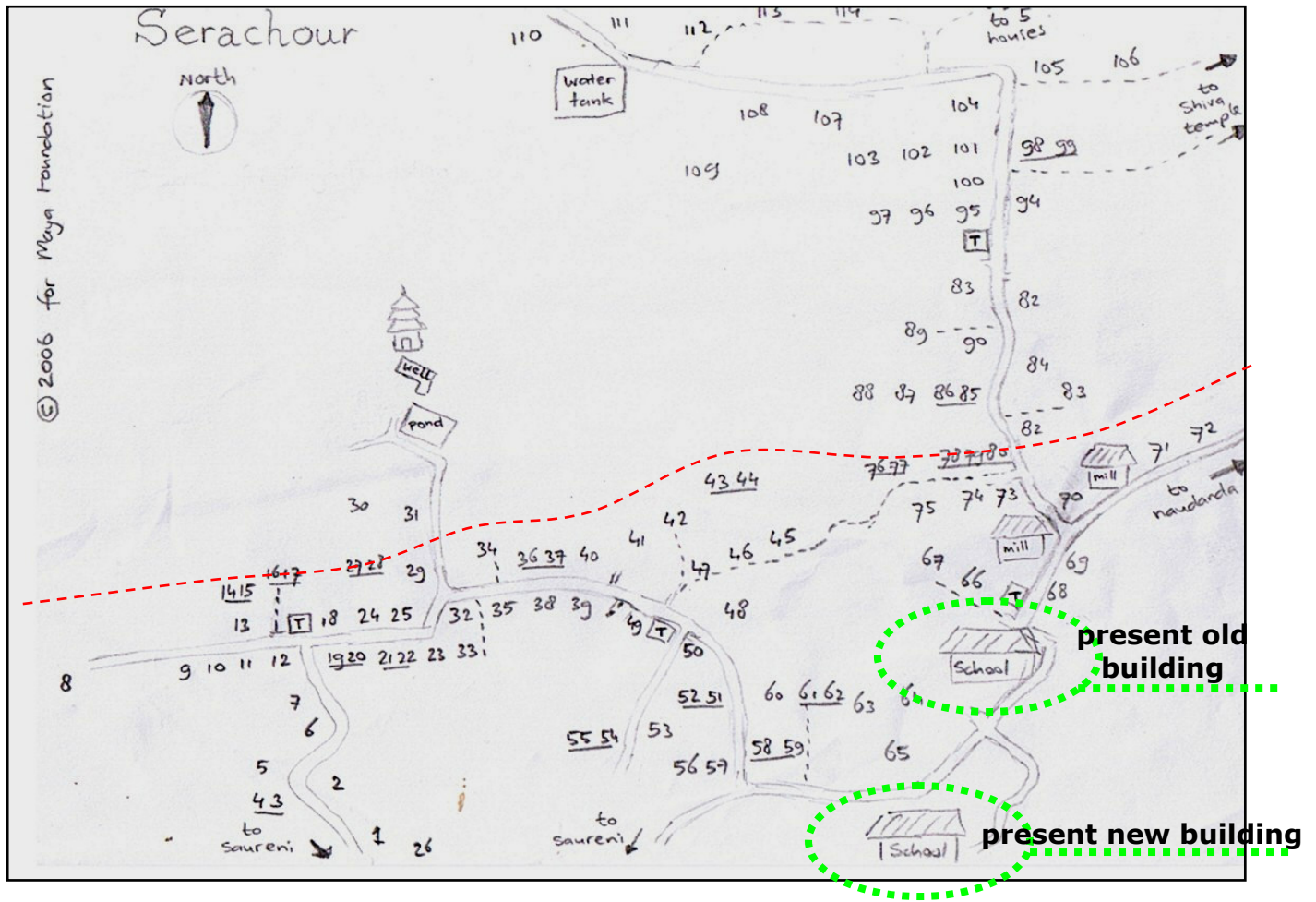
Serachour

Kaski district

NEPAL

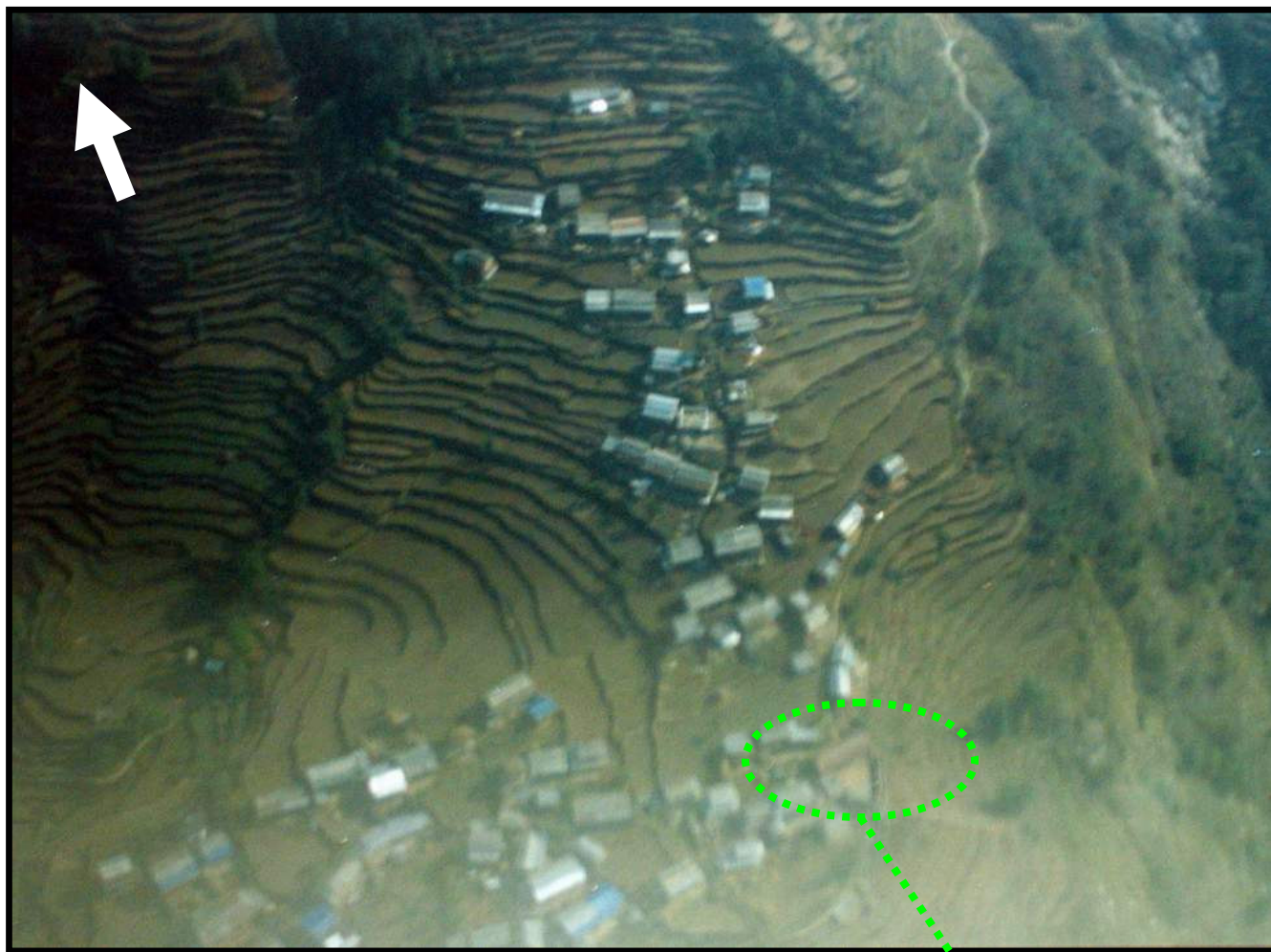
rene@stichting-maya.nl

Appendix 1: Hand drawn map of Serachour village (2006)



Legend:
 --- = unpaved footpaths
 - - - = the recently built road in April 2007 (added to map afterwards)
 T = communal tap
 8 = house belonging to 1 household
21 22 = house belonging to 2 households living together according to the joint family system

Appendix 2: Aerial photo of Serachour village (2004)



Present old building

Appendix 3: Ground plan of future complex

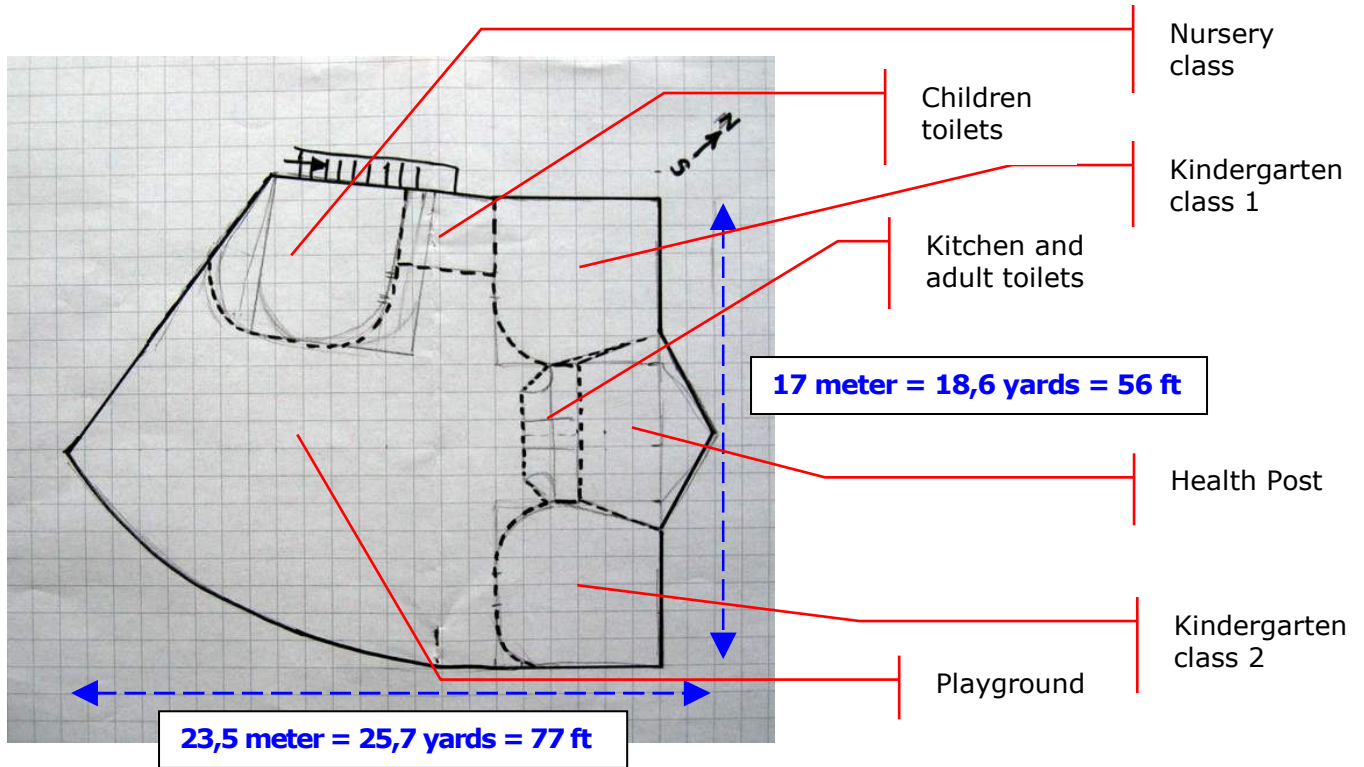


Fig. 1: ground floor

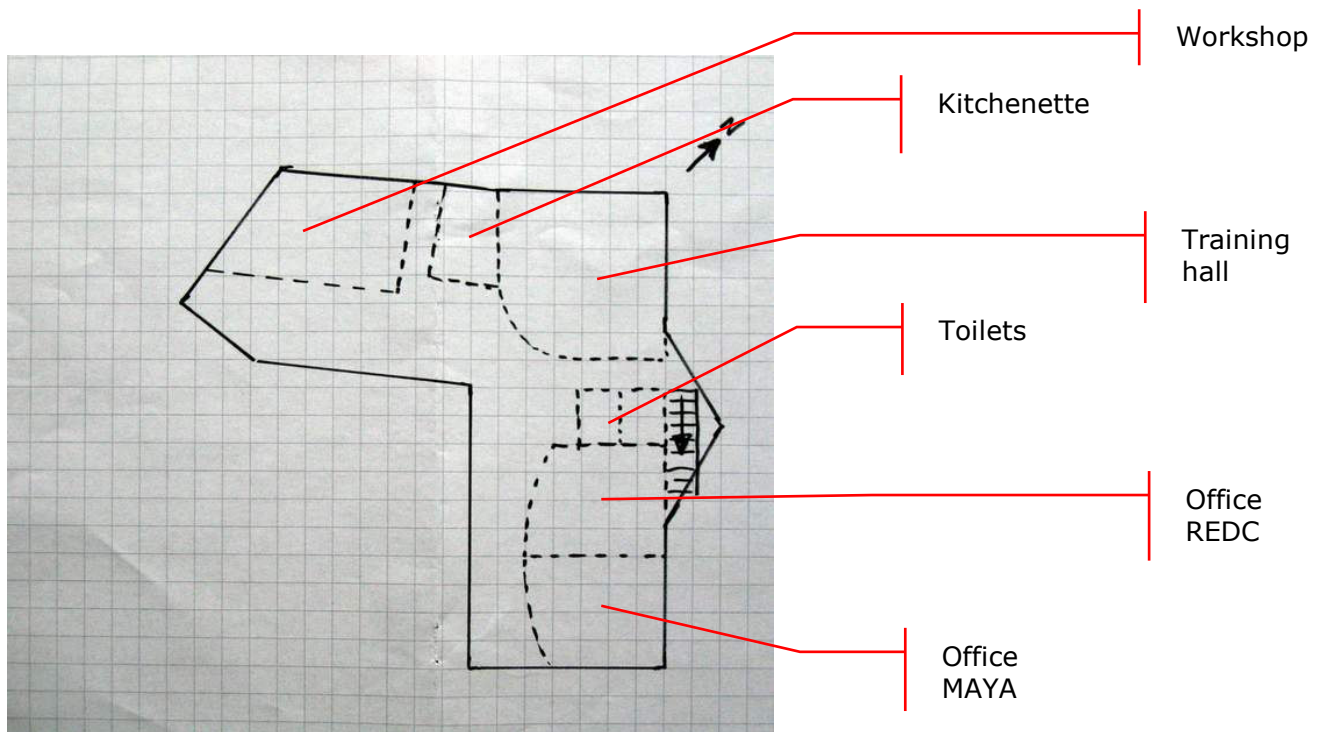


Fig. 2: first floor

Appendix 4: budget for Maya Foundation Nepal to build the ECETC in Serachour, Kaski, Nepal



Item	costs				remarks
	rupees (x1000)	€ maya	€ paulus	\$ M.Fund	
Macro infrastructure					
construction 3 rooms: 20 x 20 feet each (nursery, kindergarten 1 and 2)	900			12500	Incl. materials, transport, labor, etc.
interior of the 3 rooms	40			556	carpets, blackboards, racks, shelves, etc
construction health post	200		2273		
interior health post	100		1136		
construction playground	20			278	enclosure, gate, trees (shade), grass
construction toilets (x2)	50	568			Incl. basins, hilltake tank and drainage
construction traininghall (20 x 20 ft)	300			4167	
interior traininghall	60			833	
construction 2 office rooms	400		4545		
construction workshop room	300		3409		
connection watersupply	35	398			tank, sandstone filters, pipes
electricity	30			417	Incl. meter, fusebox, hook-up fee to electricity company, lights
subtotal 1 (macro)	2435	966	11364	18750	
Micro infrastructure					
Set nursery	30	341			educational materials, teddy bears, etc.
Set lower kindergarten	30	341			puzzles, crayons, books, dolls, building blocks, etc. level 1
Set upper kindergarten	30	341			puzzles, crayons, books, dolls, building blocks, etc. level 2
Playground playsets	40		455		slide, seesaw, sandbox
Set sport and games	20		227		hoops, whistles, drum, balls, nets, ropes, etc
set First Aid	2	23			First Aid kit
subtotal 2 (micro)	152	1045	682	0	
Personal infrastructure					
Course child - teacher contact	90	1023			Taught by ECEC in Kathmandu (Dutch organisation) 1 week course
Course didactics	45	511			Taught by Maya Nepal
subtotal 3 (personal)	135	1534	0	0	
grand total	2722	3545	12045	18750	
		3545			Maya Foundation
			12045		Paulus Mundial
				18750	Mountain Fund