



## The School

Rural schools in Nepal lack trained teachers, classroom materials and often don't even have toilet facilities. Corporal punishment is alive and well and teaching consists of rote memorization.

Against this backdrop, parents need labor on their subsistence farms. With 80% plus of the population living on subsistence farms, and an out-migration of 1500 youth per day who take jobs throughout the Gulf region, family farms are more challenged than ever to meet their labor needs.

Kids leave school early. According to the Department of Education 25% of the children

starting class one will not reach class five. 60% of all students starting school will not finish class 10. In small, poor villages like Mankhu, where our project is located, the numbers are probably worse.

We first attempted to work with the small village school to address these problems but politics, government instability and lack of educated teachers made the task impossible for now.

Undeterred we set about to create our own educational programs to make up for the lack of decent schooling in the village. We started on the front porch of our farm house with 10 children one day. The next it was 15, then 20, 30 and within one month 80 per day.

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Many families mortgage their farms to send children to school in Kathmandu where English is taught. In a developing country with a huge base of tourism and work in the NGO sector, English is the key to good jobs. The rural schools are not able to teach English as teachers, generally, don't speak any, or very little, English themselves. Our first draw for students was English being taught by native speakers. We host over 100 volunteers in Nepal each year so we have a good supply of native speakers to teach.

The children themselves asked for help with homework. Since the quality of teachers is poor in the local school, they are often frustrated and confused by the homework required in their textbooks. So using both volunteers from abroad, and older Nepali

girls living in the village, we began to offer before and after school tutoring.

Next, the local youth group came to us and asked about computers and the internet. They knew that friends in Kathmandu had access to these things and were connected via social sites to Nepali's all over the world. They felt they were being left behind by staying in the village and pondered leaving for the city. Over 1500 youth leave Nepal each and every day to work outside the country and many youth in our village thought that may be best for them too. We are now building and will complete the building of a room for the youth group with laptop computers and internet connection. We managed, with great difficulty to get a line-of-site wimax connection working at the farm and now have internet there.

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# Rural Learning

by **The Mountain Fund**

Good habits formed at youth make all the difference in the world.

Aristotle

Our day-care will open in Spring of 2014 and is now under construction as well. In the photo above, the building which houses the before and after school program is the single-story building on the left. Day care is being added in that building. At the center of the photo is the farm staff house and right now we are adding a second story which will house the youth group's computer lab where we will have 10 netbooks and one computer connected to a large, flat-panel television for group teaching.

Not easy to see in the photo but to the right of the staff house we are building a kitchen where we will prepare nutritious, hot meals each day for all the children attending before and after school programs as well as the day-care children. Many in this village do not get enough to eat each day, especially the girls who customarily have to wait until the male members of the household eat to get the leftovers. It's hard to learn when your stomach is empty or you are malnourished. To the far right in the photo is volunteer

housing where we host over 100 volunteers, from 26 countries (so far) who help teach in the school programs, especially English.

They day-care is important both for children and for their mothers. Women do 90% of the work on the family farm and have to take those children who are too young for school to the fields with them while they work. That places a huge burden on mothers, reduces farm outputs and deprives the children of critical early learning opportunities. Our day care solves these problems. Mom is free to work, the children are in an early learning environment and getting education, attention and stimulation critical for their development.

We have more than 80 children a day coming to our farm school and many more who want to come. At present we are serving Mankhu village but we've already been approached by nearby villages who want us to expand and enlarge what we are doing so they can send their children as well. Many of the children who attend the local school walk from villages like Goganpani, about one hour away and the parents in Goganpani have even asked us to build a hostel at the farm so their children can stay all week and not make the 2 hour daily round trip to school and be able to attend our before and after school programs daily. We are certainly thinking about that and if our campaign is successful, we will no doubt expand.