

Water is Life

Description

Clean, safe water — a matter of life and death that we take so for granted. Especially the convenience of having it by turning on a faucet at our kitchen/bathroom sinks!

The highlight of this week was our trip to visit some past and present project sites. What a marvelous experience seeing firsthand the fruits of the labors of CHOICE Humanitarian-led workers on water supply projects!

These projects were implemented in the hilly Lamjung District of central Nepal. They did it with local labor contributions, the beneficiary villagers helping to dig the trenches, lay the pipeline, and then backfill the trenches.

Our outing started early Wednesday morning so we could make the 6-hour drive and still have time to visit some people and villages before dark. Kiran's 16-year-old son Abeesh came with us. He had to go to Besishahar (where we stayed Wednesday night) to apply for and get his citizenship papers. (You're not automatically born a citizen in Nepal!) Besishahar is where Kiran still has his permanent residence papers, this city being the headquarters of the Lamjung district he was born and raised in.

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Abeesh and Kiran at our lunch stop

As we've come to expect, the roads were terrible. Construction is underway to improve some stretches, but that made for more dust and delay. But we endured the discomfort and it was worth it!



Our trusty 4WD transportation



Early morning view at our hotel in Besishahar



Nice view of the mountains



A beautiful day, a beautiful hillside



View from the hillside

The best part of our trip? Seeing the people who didn't before but now have clean, safe water so conveniently available at (though not in) their homes, so happy and so very grateful to those who made it possible and made it happen.



A water storage tank near Besishahar



Another storage tank



Thankful and blessed

We met in a pavilion they built for community gatherings for a little celebration. An old woman told her story, which I'm sure her neighbors have heard many times before, as some of them looked bored or maybe slightly amused (perhaps they were thinking "She embellishes it every time she tells it!").

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The Storyteller about to begin (rightmost in black and blue)



How many times have we heard this? (Taunya should win a prize for this photo!)

But she knew she was playing to a fresh audience even though we didn't understand her. Kiran video-recorded it and promised to provide us with the video and transcription.

Many others echoed what she said. A common sentiment in this particular village — what surprised and delighted them the most — was that they could have water delivered to their homes from a spring that was *below* them in elevation. It is now pumped from the source below into a storage tank above them. They never thought that would happen! It took a lot of wrangling to get the electricity for the pump, but CHOICE and the villagers prevailed upon the local government and now it's a reality.

Thursday afternoon we got to visit a school and had another ceremony where in addition to Kiran and other school and community officials, Taunya and I both spoke, extemporaneously!

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Schoolchildren gathering for the ceremony



VIPs posing after the ceremony

This is a school that CHOICE supplied with water and some furniture. Kiran told us later that they took a survey asking the students what they valued the most. Overwhelmingly they answered “water” — because its availability *at their homes* meant they could actually go to school — their mothers could be home to fix them breakfast instead of needing to make the 3-4 hour journey to fetch water each

morning!

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Some schoolchildren seeing us off

We met this sweet, frail old woman at her home and took a picture. She wanted us to stay for a while but we didn't have time. Kiran told us about her and her husband (who wasn't there at the time — he was at the community gathering waiting for us to arrive). They are in their late eighties or early nineties. Starting as a young girl, she spent 60+ years fetching water from that downhill source, which meant carrying the full containers *uphill*. CHOICE also built them a new, modest home that they are so grateful to have.

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Their old house

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Their new house (she is spreading out a welcome mat)

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Just a quick photo of us with her

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And with her husband (in front of the community gathering pavilion)

The water from their tap-stands also allows residents to irrigate and grow gardens, and thus have some healthy vegetables to eat, and the surplus to sell. Many of them grow rice too. We saw some of them working their plateaued rice fields, others threshing the harvested rice, and still others milling it to remove the husks.



A nice family home (the tap-stand is in front, in the lower right quadrant of the photo)

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Stark difference in houses (though both have tap-stands)

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A dazzle of colors



Post-harvest rice field tilling



Ready to thresh

<http://firstthreeodds.org/wpcontent/uploads/2023/11/threshing-rice.mp4>

We saw some of their improved cow sheds and “poly houses” that were also funded by Latter-day Saint Charities and built by CHOICE.

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I like my new shed!



Poly house and garden



Our hotel room at the Riverside Resort on our way home



Cool swimming pool at the Riverside (no, we did not go swimming)

On Friday, just after we got home, we went upstairs for a little get-together with the VanDenBerghes, who were invited to lunch by our (and their former) landlord, Krishna, who also invited us to come.



Enjoying a delicious home-cooked Nepali meal

The VanDenBerghes were the humanitarian missionary couple who were here from 2018-2020. They had to leave when COVID shut things down in March 2020, 5 months before their mission was over. Hmm, that's about the amount of time we have left. I wonder how we would handle a 24-hour notice to drop everything and leave! They were able to tie up some loose ends remotely, and I suspect we could too.

It was great to see and visit with them a little. They actually came back to see the members they grew to love and were sad not to be able to say a proper goodbye to.

They planned a "Linger Longer" that we all enjoyed after church yesterday. After that we went with them to watch a program put on by the students (and some of the teachers/staff) at "The Organization" — Self Help Nepal — that was founded by a sweet German sister (Ellen Dietrich — "Ellen Auntie" as all the children at the orphanage/school affectionately call her) who just got back from spending several months at her home in Germany. The program was celebrating Tihar, the Nepali "Festival of Lights". It was long — almost 3 hours! But they were enthusiastic performers and fun to watch and listen to (even though the volume was way too high). They have a teacher who teaches them singing and dancing several hours a week, and it was obvious they enjoy it!

<http://firstthreeodds.org/wpcontent/uploads/2023/11/dancing-for-tihar.mp4>

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The Akama Hotel's "Rangoli" (This is an art form in which patterns are created using materials such as rice flour, coloured sand, quartz powder, flower petals, and coloured rocks. It is an everyday practice making it is mostly reserved for festivals and other important celebrations as it is time consuming. —

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Saying goodbye to our new friends

Speaking of new friends, another highlight of our week was meeting (over Zoom) the new couple who were just called to replace us when we leave Nepal! They're the Nuffers from Richmond, Virginia, whose background and experience are ideal for serving as Country Directors of LDS Charities Nepal. We know they will do great things during their 23 months here, not only in the humanitarian work but also in serving the members. We were super excited to learn that she plays the piano and has taught private piano lessons! The members we're struggling to teach will be even more excited!

[Isaiah 58:11](#) is my favorite verse this week:

*And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought,
and make fat thy bones:
and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water,
whose waters fail not.*

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