

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

Description

Another full and sometimes frustrating, but mostly instructive and fruitful week!

On Monday we got a letter from the Ministry of Home Affairs, another step in the visa application process. Except it had an error — it had my birthday a day off from what it is. Manoj did his phone magic and got that fixed, then that letter allowed our getting yet another letter from the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, recommending us to the Department of Labor. More on which below.

On Wednesday we met two gentlemen from the Young Star Club of Solukumbu District in the Koshi Province of Eastern Nepal. We discovered that they as an NGO who has been doing social improvement projects for nearly 4.5 decades are a worthy partner to LDS Charities, and so we will try to work together. They agreed to email us their project concept and we will take it from there. Solukumbu is noteworthy for being the district Mount Everest is in!

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Us with Bachchu, Nutan and Dipak (our accountant who introduced us to them)

On Thursday we paid a visit to SERC (Special Education and Rehabilitation Centre) and met its founders, Anish and Kalpana. They have a school in a municipality about a 45-minute drive from Kathmandu, and a shop and physical therapy clinic in Kathmandu.

Anish and Kalpana are delightful people, full of desire and compassion to help kids with physical and mental disabilities. In their shop they repair wheelchairs (among other things) and also custom-design and build some. One of their “kids”, now an adult and a wheelchair user himself, does the bulk of the work in this shop.

The clinic serves about 30 pre-school-aged kids who need physical therapy, and the school serves about 90. The schoolchildren have various mental and physical handicaps, from autism to cerebral palsy. They do a great work helping these kids learn life skills and gain basic knowledge to manage in a world that’s often unsympathetic to their plight. Some of the school’s former students teach there,

which is especially gratifying to see. Knowledge! Gained mainly through education — teaching — knowledge is the gift that keeps on giving, when you teach someone something who then teaches others, and then those still others, growing and expanding to enormous reach!



In the kitchen, us and the SERC school student who serves as their cook

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A dorm room where some students sleep



A view of the school from its rooftop



Us and Anish at his school, for which LDS Charities built a playground in 2019

Yesterday Manoj and I spent 3 hours altogether, half of that waiting for a chance to go into the Department of Labor building and talk to someone to make sure the form they gave him that we filled out the day before was done correctly. It was, except for signing and dating it. Then the official gave me an interview form to fill out, answering questions that have already been answered in another document we had to prepare for the Social Welfare Council. But of course they needed my answers on this separate form.

So tomorrow we have to pay 20,000 Rupees (about \$150) as a fee for the work permit. But we have to go to a bank to pay it and get a receipt/voucher and then go back and hand this voucher to someone at the Department of Labor so that Monday we can come back yet again to get the actual work permit!

The work permit is the last document we need (there are five others that we have in hand) for applying for the working visa that is required to act as the Country Director of LDS Charities Nepal. These six documents have to be uploaded to the website of the Immigration Department, and if what it says on this website is accurate, the visa itself will be “gratis” — no fee! (This has not been the case in the recent past, so it remains to be seen.)

This whole process has been an education that we can package and give to the senior couple who will replace us so that their learning curve will be much easier to negotiate. And the gift will keep on giving for future couples' benefit as well. We feel strongly that a big part of why we're here is to significantly smooth the way for our successors. Unfortunately, we will not be around to see the completion of the projects that we have had a hand in starting (except for maybe two or three), given the lengthy duration of these efforts. But we can still keep abreast of their progress and learn of their (hopefully wildly successful) completion after we leave. That is our fond wish!

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