

The Flying Penguin

Newsletter of International Volunteers for Peace

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Post Earthquake Workcamp

Jay Thomas-Burrows in Nepal last November.

Upon arrival in Nepal I learned of the impact of the 2015 petrol crisis first hand. Buses were queuing up at the petrol station for three days with no guarantee that petrol would be available. Tours were being cancelled as a result, as if the impact from the earthquake was not bad enough! Some operators were resorting to buying petrol at 5 times the usual price on the black market.



"We had France, Italy, Slovenia, Belgium, Bangladesh, Nepal and Australia represented in the group. I made new friends and will stay in contact. "



On my first day in Kathmandu I had free time to roam the streets and see some of the tourist sights. There were amazing colours and vibrancy that made it very exciting just to be there. Walking through downtown the earthquake damage was apparent. Temples were completely toppled, relics roped off as no-go zones. Then the real adventure began. I walked to Ratnapark bus park, through the markets with vendors selling everything from fresh produce to underwear. At last on the bus to Panauti, I had to travel on the roof for 70 Nepali Rupees, sitting on the luggage rack with all natural air conditioning.

This is where we really noticed the impact of the petrol crisis, as locals told us they wouldn't normally be riding on the roof of the bus. After a couple of hours we made it to Panauti where we met with Punya and Anil, our SCI Nepal contacts. After some Chai, the trek to Balthali village began.

Balthali village is mainly inhabited by Tamang people. The ethnic Tamang are one of the largest indigenous populations in Nepal and have their own unique culture and warm hospitality. We had a nice house to stay in and each night we played card games and socialised at the local store downstairs of the home we were staying in.

We were shown the school and given an opportunity to ask questions about what the needs and priorities at the school were. For instance we learned that the school has been overlooked by government funding and they are lacking teachers. They didn't have uniforms or even shoes.

These seemed like pressing issues however we soon discovered a more pressing issue: the water supply. A pump by the nearby water source, a river, had a broken gasket and so there was a scarcity of water. This later became the issue that we decided to help fix (in addition to the earthquake rubble clearing) that would have the greatest impact.



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Post Earthquake Workcamp - cont

Work on the school began. We moved piles of bricks and took down an old shelter which then cleared the way for community soccer games. I had brought a soccer ball and this became a prized possession - it was kicked off the cliff on the first day and a local hero we nicknamed "Tarzan", ran and jumped off the cliff with a fierce determination that the ball was not going to be lost. An hour and a half later he came back with the ball, arms scratched up (I was glad I brought the first-aid kit). The local children loved playing soccer and we were delighted to join them.

The children were a highlight. They brought a smile to my face every day I was there and this alone made the trip worthwhile. They are very resilient given their circumstances and when we decided to get the wheelbarrows out to repair a road next to the school, they were quick to jump onboard and help out. They were such delightful characters.

After the work for the day was complete we had fantastic trekking opportunities on the surrounding hills, with views of the Himalayas. This was a great way to travel, having a local indigenous figurehead as our guide, while making a positive impact on the community.

At the end of the camp, there was a ceremony where we handed over our donations and made small speeches. We donated some additional money which was used to repair the water supply. This meant that the villagers did not have to carry heavy loads of water to their homes and could use taps nearby for drinking water, making a direct impact on their quality of life.

All in all, doing a trip like this while being a part of an organisation like SCI/IVP, dedicated to promoting a culture of peace and social justice, was a valuable experience that I would recommend to anyone considering going abroad.

We love to hear from You!

This is our first newsletter in the new format. It is work in progress. We love to hear your views, comments, opinions, ideas and suggestions as this is your newsletter. Provide your feedback to admin@ivp.org.au

Yes We Camp!

Up-coming workcamps - a few suggestions

More available: <http://www.ivp.org.au/project-search/>



**Stonequarry NSW
Citizen Science.
27 Apr – 12 May**

This project aims to ensure connectivity of habitats and biodiversity survival under the threats related to climate change. We will continue the work of previous workcamps in rehabilitation of native habitat. As well, we will provide support for schools and local community in citizen science activities including a BioBlitz, a 24-hour event in which teams of volunteer scientists, students, and community members work together to find and identify as many species of, in this case, arboreal mammals.



**Botanic Garden in
Reykjavík, Iceland,
24 Apr - 07 May**

The Botanic Garden is an outdoor collection of living plants with the objective to conserve plants for education, research and delight. It conserves some 5,000 plant species in 8 plant collections. The collections give an idea of the enormous diversity of vegetation in the northern temperate zone. Volunteers will be doing general garden work, attending the flowers, trees and other plants. Volunteers will assist in organising and carrying out special events that might be planned with a short notice but they will all be related to the general aim and work of the garden.



**Appi-kogen
(Iwate) Japan,
24 - 30 Mar**

A devastating earthquake occurred in the eastern part of Japan on March 11th 2012, causing unprecedented damage. 80% of the houses were damaged and many people still live in temporary housing. Children could not use the school playground because there are so many temporary houses. So we offer these children to enjoy the outdoor activities in their vacation, helping out and sharing your culture with the children in the Ski/Snowboard Kids camp.

Check our Facebook 'International Volunteer for Peace' for updates.

The Living Past www.archives.sciint.org

SCI Archives - a rich resource

SCI's International Archives are housed in the library of La Chaux-de-Fonds in Switzerland. Heinz Gabathuler, the current Coordinator, is kept busy with filing and retrieving documents and answering requests.

Sometimes he has to visit places of historical importance to SCI to gather or supply documents or attend events. He also receives visitors and researchers at the archives.

Natascha Schmöller spent a few days consulting files for her thesis on the Swiss humanitarian aid in Spain and France. A new publication on the same subject by Jose Martinez Cobo has profited from research in the SCI Archives in 2014.

Two new volumes arrived at the Archives, the history of SCI in Lebanon and Jordan from 1954 to 1963. A documentary film project on SCI services in post-war Algeria has received funding from Swiss Television. And a French couple will make a documentary about SCI history.

SCI Archives made a donation to a new museum due to open in March 2016 in Friedland, Germany, on the spot where a refugee camp once stood. The Archives supplied photos, a call for volunteers, and a workcamp diary on SCI service in the refugee camp there in 1946.

Documents and photos from the Archives contributed to a presentation on pacifism at a seminar held near Esnes, France, a village that was destroyed by German troops during the war and reconstructed by international volunteers at first SCI workcamp. The seminar, remembering 100 years since World War I and 95 years of SCI service, also made possible some inspiring encounters with veterans from different periods of SCI history.

You can get involved internationally.

Two new international funds are being set up, one for projects with refugees and the other for projects to give direct assistance after natural disasters, both topics of top priority in the current climate of war and global warming. IVP members can join a team:

Disaster relief, Building bridges, Pool of Trainers, Asia-Pacific Development, Finance and Insurance and Exchange Evaluation

IVP – What's Happening

Committee Matters

At its AGM on 31 August IVP elected a new committee. Stephen Horn remains as Chairperson. Ganesh Rao is looking after placements. Anthony, who lives in London, has taken responsibility for membership matters. Roger Donbovand has overseen the build of a new website. We are lucky to have David Martyn as Treasurer. Richard Hord and Rita Sofea stepped down after long service and were thanked. Rita has retained a role as Public Officer. And we appreciate the ongoing service of Beverly Tyson as Bookkeeper.

We only have 5 on the committee and would like to have eight so if you are willing to take on a role and an action area, please contact IVP. Meetings are once a month but there is work to be done in between, with each committee member taking a role in one of these key areas of responsibility:

- Office Management and Administration;
- Volunteer Management and Recruitment;
- IT and Secretarial
- Marketing and Fundraising;
- Australian Projects; and
- Newsletter.

We look forward to hearing from members on their experiences or ideas for IVP in 2016.

SCI - what's happening internationally



Rita attended the SCI International Committee Meeting in Sri Lanka in December. This is the meeting that decides all SCI policy and projects. As a result of being elected to the International Executive Committee of SCI, she is now able to bring you direct news of interesting international actions and how to get involved.

First of all the SCI website has a new address: sci.ngo (the old address will still get you there). This gives more credibility as only registered NGOs can use this. Should IVP follow suit?

Volunteering to make a difference