



Water, Education, and Capacity Building Project Namje Village, Nepal

Background Information

Namje is a small, radish-farming community in the Eastern hills of Nepal in Dhankuta district, approximately 6,000 feet above sea level, three hours by bus to the nearest port of commerce. The village, with spectacular views of the Himalayas on one side and river valleys on the other, is almost always in a cloud of fog. In Namje, there is a school, two transmission towers, and a small health post that operates out of one of the rooms of the school. The village is traversed in the middle by a dirt road and has had electricity for the last 7 years. Most of the villagers belong to the traditionally underprivileged ethnic group, Magar. Most people own less than half an acre of land, making it nearly impossible to earn a profit through agriculture. Only about 5% of the villagers actually have paying jobs.

Over the last five years, the villagers of Namje have created substantial local development through internal cooperation, outside financial assistance, and tremendous local organization skills on the part of the local principal. This is not a village that sits idle. Between 1999 and 2001, the villagers built a new two-story building for the school by carrying stone, cement, water, sand, gravel, wood, fixtures, and rod, on their backs up the mountainside to the school. As soon as this new school building was constructed, the villagers embarked on the construction of a water pumping system to combat the daily challenge of manually carrying water by pumping water 400 meters vertically from the river source. Many of the villagers did not have food in their homes during this work period but still labored.

Whereas before, entire families including small children would descend the mountainside in the cold darkness carrying giant aluminum canisters on their backs to obtain water, expending precious hours daily fetching liters of river water, now with the push of a button, the villagers can pump over 100,000 liters of water per day. The remarkable characteristic of this highly technological project is that it was built almost entirely with local manpower, and it is currently being operated and managed successfully by a fifteen-member committee which the villagers formed. Even the \$45,000, which was required to

build the system, was raised, in part, through persuasive letter-writing and statistical compilations prepared by the villagers for foreign donors.

In constructing this water supply system, the villagers, over a sixteen month work period, excavated and installed a four-mile HDP pipeline, excavated and installed a one-kilometer long aluminum pipeline, constructed cement support blocks every ten meters to handle the high water pressure exerted on the pipeline, built a 33,000 liter reservoir and catchment system at the river, a twenty-thousand liter intermediate tank, three 25,000 liter circular reserve tanks, transported and installed two 700-pound water pumps, built 50 water taps with appropriate connections, and a water tank and tap house for the students at the school. Just a few months ago, students would come to the teacher's office and ask for water, and be denied because there was none, sending thirsty, tired students into the village in search of a glass of water. Now, each student receives ten liters of (untreated) river water every day. With over 18 village meetings, countless informal surveys and re-surveys, repair and maintenance trainings, and domestic hygiene workshops for the women of Namje, these villagers demonstrated and continue to demonstrate exemplary cooperation with each other and with their local leadership. A logical next-step is to treat the water and expand Namje's water supply into neighboring villages that still don't have water access.

In Namje school, there are 457 students across ten grade levels including a nursery section, with just 12 teachers and a principal. Simply making sure that there is a teacher in every class every period of the day is a daunting task. Ensuring individualized, hands-on, practical learning time for each student is a near impossibility, given the lack of space, manpower, and teaching materials. The principal and school board are committed towards creating a more practical, hands-on education system, investing 10,000 Nepali Rupees every year for new science demonstration materials. Namje's principal is one of the most renown educators of Nepal, and a true believer in the integration of school and community. The community coordinator for both the school construction project as well as the water project, Mr. Harka Lama has taught in the Nepali public school system for over 35 years.