



Getting to Nepal project an adventure

By Dale Dodge,
Nepal committee chair

We had gone 160 km, on paved and windy roads, in four hours, and had only 40 km left to go. Basic arithmetic says we have about one more hour to travel. Unfortunately, the rough roads of Ramechhap said otherwise. After 10 km on a truly incredibly rough track, the driver began to have major difficulty keeping the Tata 4-wheel drive jeep moving in a straight

line. A quick inspection showed us that the two front wheels were no longer parallel – one faced north and the other faced south.

An hour later, after a ‘farmer fix’ that we did not question, we were back on the road. Three hours later had us in Manthali, the main city and capital of Ramechhap. The 40 kms had taken us five dusty, bumpy hours.

Two days later, high in the rugged mountains outside of Manthali, on the way to Seleni, the same driver in the same jeep

started having to use the emergency brake to slow down on the steep hills. Arriving at the trail head for Seleni, he opened the hood to find that one of the four brake lines had broken and all of the hydraulic brake fluid had leaked away. When we got back to the jeep three hours later, after visiting the new water project in Seleni, the driver had disconnected the one leaky brake line, leaving us with three brakes, and was ready to take us to our next village. But what about brake fluid? No problem! As we were speaking, his friend who he had phoned on his cell phone, arrived on a motorcycle with a bottle of brake fluid and five more gallons of fuel. He had driven two hours from Manthali to solve the problem.

That night we slept on a porch under the stars of a Nepali night. The next, we slept in a ‘hotel’ room with newspaper lined walls and a bathroom that was across the street and 70 metres down the hill. The first day looking at water projects, we ate breakfast, ate again at 10 a.m. after viewing the project, ate again at lunch, ate again in the afternoon at the next project, and then ate again for supper. We soon learned to forego breakfast and lunch as everyone always wanted to feed the Canadians who helped them improve their village.

Our planned seven day tour was shortened to six days when notification arrived that the road back to Kathmandu was to be closed due to a strike and we would have to leave early. Nine more hours had us back to the comforts of the big city.

But the six days in Ramechhap, I would not change for any number of days anywhere else. The place grows on you. The people are so happy to see us visit them and so pleased to show off the results of their hard work and organization. ‘Their’ water system. ‘Their’ new toilet. ‘Their’ new stove.

Ramechhap Program Coordinator Suresh Shrestha and Manthali clinic physician Dr. Suman Karmacharya were booked to tour B.C. communities in October. They were to be guest speakers at a rural development symposium in Kamloops. They had talks and presentations booked around the province. But the Canadian Visa offices in Delhi and in Kathmandu were not convinced that they would return to Nepal, so refused them visitor visas. We think we know how to remedy the situation, and are trying again for March 2010. We will be in touch as the time draws nearer.



The water user committee for the water system in Seleni. This group planned, directed the building of, and looks after the ongoing care and maintenance of the water system.

Honduran politics creating problems for program

Although most of the news about the turmoil in Honduras following the military coup that sent President Manuel Zelaya out of the country reported on the demonstrations in the capital Tegucigalpa, the remote corner of the country containing La Esperanza program was also impacted. Zelaya chose a Nicaraguan border town only 70 kilometres from the program for one of his symbolic challenges to the interim government. The military responded by imposing a 24-hour curfew that forbade any travel or meetings forcing a decision to pull out our staff for a short time lest they be trapped indefinitely in the villages with no access to their homes and families.

The restrictions on travel and an alarming breakdown in law and order also altered the plans for World Neighbours Canada’s annual monitoring visit. With air tickets already purchased and vacation schedules committed, the six volunteers opted to complete an altered tour that did not include La Esperanza.

The six volunteers were board member Michael Newman, two members of the Oliver

Please turn over...

...Honduras continued

high school's World Neighbours Club - Chloe Brogan and Larissa The-
lin - and three 'neighbours' from the Cranbrook area who have brought
substantial donations to our newest program in Copan - Anne and An-
toine Beurskens and Shauna Plant.

Fortunately the Copan program is located only a few miles from
the Guatemalan border and because it is one of Honduras' few tourist
destinations remained open and without any obvious military presence.
This did not prevent considerable concern for the Canadians when gun
fire was heard in the street directly outside the restaurant where they
were having their first meal. It was not the military or revolutionaries,
however, but joyful Honduras celebrating a goal against Costa Rica in
a World Cup qualifying match.

The team spent a day in the mountains south of Copan visiting three
of the ten villages where work had only begun a few months before.
Following a methodology that proved successful in La Esperanza, the
first year of the program will have only a single coordinator whose
mission will be to identify the villages' natural leaders and engage the
villagers in activities that will address their needs.

The coordinator, Flor de Maria Milla, is a nurse from the nearby
community of Santa Rita de Copan who has developed a number of
approaches that focus on the village women and the issue of health.
These communities have some of the poorest health statistics in our
hemisphere. In the first village a group of women are learning how to
properly raise laying hens which in Central America requires knowing
how to construct a hen house and yard that contains them, how to im-
munize the birds against local diseases and how to prepare feed from
locally available grains and greens. It is modeled on the 'pass on the
gift' concept where the initial recipient of less than a dozen hens trains
a partner who then receives young hens raised from the initial gift.

In the second village a group of women was meeting regularly for
cooking lessons that showed them various techniques for increasing
the nutritional value of their cuisine. Here the Canadians were treated
to a lunch of 'improved' tortillas that were augmented with local herbs
and greens and several high protein dishes made with soybeans. In the
third village they met with a village committee which is focused on
constructing a small building the will serve as a regional health centre
to accommodate the government's travelling nurse.

If the Canadians could not travel to La Esperanza at least its coor-
dinator Victorino Rivera could travel to them. He came to Copan to
express the disappointment of its villagers who had been preparing an
elaborate agricultural fair to coincide with the visit but also to bring
news of continued growth and capacity building in the villages.



These Maya Chorti women are prepaing improved tortillas and a
soy-based chorizo.

Food Security



**Food security means different things to different peo-
ple. For a Canadian teenager, it's a well-stocked fridge.
For a Canadian family, it's a nearby supermarket and
a steady paycheque. For a Sahelian family in Burkina
Faso, it's a full granary like the one in the photo, near
the end of the dry season.**

**Life on the Sahel has been very tough for thousands
of years. The soils are gravelly, the sun is hot. The
rainy season may as easily bring floods or fail altogeth-
er, bringing drought. Food security has been a luxury
and a mark of accomplishment for a long time. The
population growth of the last century has brought life
to the very margins of what the land and climate can
support..**

**WNCanada is in its second year of providing support
to the APDC program in Fada, Burkina Faso, with one
goal being that every participating family will have a full
granary like this one at the end of next year's dry sea-
son.**



Check out our updated website at

www.worldneighbours.ca