

## *Experience Report*

### *Voluntary work in the educational sector in the Himalayan Region*

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**Duration of the voluntary work: 4 weeks**

**Location: Yamunadanda, Sindhupalchowk, Nepal**

What to expect, what will it be to teach English to Nepali kids, how will I manage and organise myself, since I don't have any references in the educational sector? Questions like this came up when I headed off from Europe, but honestly I just thought, let's go there and see what's coming. As long as you are passionate about the things you are doing, you are open minded and willing to share your knowledge and work together with the children, teachers, society, everything will be fine.

And it was more than fine, it was one of the most amazing experiences in my life so far.

Of course, half of a page won't be enough space to describe what I have lived and experienced in the last weeks, but I will try to give a short review.

I thought English to three different classes, the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade, which addresses an age from 12-17 years, 5 days a week from Monday to Friday. In addition to that I had a class called "Games" with the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, age between 9-12 years, where I thought them some new games and made some physical exercises with them. In total I was responsible for over 100 students a day. It sounds quite a lot, well sometimes it felt a lot, but most of the time it was running on its own. According to the teaching experience I can say, that it was necessary to be very flexible, to keep an open mind, to react immediately on things that happen in the class room and very important, to focus on what they are interest in, what they need, what they want to learn, their weaknesses and strengths. For me it was clear from the beginning on that I want to strengthen their confidence in speaking English and to improve their spoken English as well as to show them the purpose of English in their life and raise their passion for foreign languages and countries. At the beginning of those four weeks I realised very quickly, that, in my case, it was no good to work with the school books, as the used English level is far from what the students understand and the topics are not addressing their daily life and interests. So I organised myself and worked out a weekly plan for every grade with weekly topics, like *Sports, Music, Food or Human Body*. During my lessons I learned a lot about the school system in Nepal, about their culture and how to get the attention from children. Among all my topics I think *Music* was the one that triggered most enthusiasm among the students, we sang together, I introduced them to English music and different genres, they got familiar with listening comprehensions, different music instruments and how to express their preferences. It's just one example of how children learn a lot, without realising it, because they are just so passionate about the topic. One of the memories I cherish the most is the day of the farewell ceremony, where the students and teachers prepared speeches, flower bracelets, gifts and where the students from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade had great pleasure in dressing me as a Hindu bride in a red Sari.

In addition to that a big part of my voluntary work was to live and to find my place in the village society in Yamunadanda. Me and Alexander Strohmaier, another volunteer from Austria, stayed at the home of one of the English teachers, Bijay Shrestha and his family, Bimala, Rijan and Simran. I don't know how to express, how grateful I am for that experience, to get a deeper insight in Nepal's culture, the family structure, how the people are living under very rural, simple and sometimes

tough conditions, what are their needs, struggles, wishes and concerns. We had a room for our own, Alex and me and the rest of the family was staying in another room. We didn't have a proper shower, but there are public tabs all over the village and you can always heat some water and take a "shower" in the toilet, which is one big wet room. The food was very tasty, of course you have to be prepared to have more or less every day the same, but Bimala took great care of bringing some variation into the whole thing.

Last but not least I want to say a few words about the organisation itself. As voluntary work should be, I got the chance to share my knowledge, to give help to those people who really need it and to take responsibility for it. Working with Chay-Ya is very self-reliant, it's in your hands what and how you are teaching, you have to manage it on your own with the people at the place you are staying, which was for me the best thing that could have happened. If you are choosing to do voluntary work, you should choose it because YOU want to do something and not just because you want to be a puppet in a bigger play, where the organisation is telling you each and every step. In my opinion, Chay-Ya found a perfect golden middle between letting you work independent and also giving you support and a helping hand whenever you need it. From the first moment on, when I arrived at the airport and Sabine Klotz was already waiting there, picking me up, I felt safe, I felt comfortable and held back in a big lovely family.

To sum up I can just say that I'm very grateful for every experience I've made in Nepal, the hours of laughing, teaching, playing, the tasty food, hours of talking and explanations about Nepal's sometimes confusing but very interesting religious culture. I got the chance to get beyond myself, to get a new perspective about the world and the people living on it, I learned a lot about myself, my strengths and skills, which was for sure another very important chapter in my life.

Namaste and Dhanyabaad