

The Aandhimul Project - Outline & Plan June 2009 - December 2010

Written by Lee Allan UK Project Coordinator 'The Aandhimul Project' - lee@aandhimulproject.org

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1. History

The 2 founders of The Aandhimul Project, Lee Allan from the UK (who was volunteering for another organisation at that time) and Mon Bahadur Bhujel (a Primary School teacher at that time) from Nepal, both met in January of 2008 in a Central Nepal, hilltop town called Bandipur. This small town is located, with easy bus access, 5 hours west of the capital, Kathmandu. After becoming friends, Mon introduced Lee to the village of Aandhimul (2 hours walk from Bandipur) asking for help. Mon's connection to village is that he has family who live there, and he understands the difficulties they are going through and with passion wants to help them. It was this passion that convinced Lee, without a doubt to do whatever he can to help.

Very quickly two more people wanted to be involved in the project. They were volunteers from Bandipur who worked alongside Lee. Angela Sharp from Australia and Jolana Whyte from the UK. After a short period of time spent in the village before leaving the country in March 2008, Lee decided to start this Project, 'The Aandhimul Project', with both Angela and Jolana joining and wanting to do everything they could to help.

2. What we have achieved so far (April 2008-09)

The project started slowly because both Mon in Nepal, and Lee, Angela and Jolana in their respective countries had full-time work and volunteered during their free time. But, in March 2008 whilst in Nepal, and when Lee stayed in the village, it was decided that one of the first

things we could provide was extra support to the school, which was needed very much.

So the first priority was to raise some money to pay for 2 new teachers and their salaries, and also increase the Caretaker's salary too. Second, the school buildings needed to be renovated and the plan was to raise money for such work as well.

In July 2008 Lee, and Bob Uppington from SHIVA Charity UK, a registered charity with over 12 years experience in Nepal, met. After a great meeting, SHIVA Charity kindly agreed that The Aandhimul Project could work through them and use their experience, also gaining gift aid on any donations given within the UK.

In South Australia between April and August 2008, Angela Sharp managed to raise enough money to cover wages for one year, and by the end of August 2008, Mon and the community of Aandhimul found the two teachers needed, and they were employed. Also, a bank account was set up for the project in Nepal for these funds to be sent to.

Similar to Lee in the UK, Angela found a charity, World Youth International, who would help using their experience, and transfer funds raised from Australia to the bank account in Nepal.

Also, during the summer of 2008 Lee and Jolana managed to raise over £1000 for the school's renovation, from a fund raising dinner held at a Nepali restaurant and 5km charity run in Central London. Then in October, Lee made a return trip to Nepal to get this project started and spend time with the community.

Whilst Lee was in Nepal, Jolana from the UK also received £1500 donated from her employer to contribute towards the school and any other project work that was needed.

In the 2 months Lee was in Nepal, himself and Mon spent time trying to understand the community of Aandhimul greater, and to find out their needs. We realised in this time that there were, and are many issues in this village, and that it would require much more time to understand them and help to resolve them. But first, we believed that for the project to continue and have any chance of being successful that it need to start to employ full-time workers, at least in Nepal to begin with.

After a few long discussions, and due to Mon's great passion to want to make a difference, it was decided that as of April 2009 (the end of the Nepali school year), The Project would employ Mon as a full-time worker. Taking the role as Nepal Project Coordinator.

As for the school building renovation, it was not completed until December 2008, after Lee had left Nepal and returned to the UK. There's also another school building that is too small and not worthy of renovation, and many discussions have taken place, and there are plans to build a new and larger school building to accommodate for the increasing number of students, and to provide better facilities. However, further planning and funding is needed for this to go ahead.

During his time in Nepal, Lee also discovered that the teacher's who were employed by The Project had no previous training, and it was felt a priority to find adequate training for them. After discussing with Angela and Jolana, who had both decided to return to Nepal in April 2009, that with their teaching experience they would put on three weeks of teacher training. Also, Lee's girlfriend Yoshie Uchimura from Japan, who's a freelance illustrator and picture book author, also planned to go to Nepal to run a creative workshop with the children in the school.

In April 2009, for the first time the project intensified. With Mon working full-time and 4 people from overseas, we could really get working within the village and in particular the school. Angela, Jolana & Yoshie, under sometimes difficult circumstances, achieved a great deal in the 4 weeks of April working with the 3 Project paid teachers. With communication issues, cultural differences, hot weather and lack of facilities many bridges were crossed, and near the end of the teacher training it was evident to all, of the hard effort that was put in by the results that were seen.

Also, It was during this intense period that we further understood the deeper issues that this community faces, and most importantly we spent time with the them so they could try to understand us too, and why we, The Aandhimul Project are wanting to help them.

3. Why they need & want our help, and how we can!

As stated in the previous section, our most valuable experiences have come in the month of April 2009 and also during May when both Jolana and Lee continued there work in the community, and with Jolana extending her stay into June. Also, with Mon working full-time he is able to create a relationship with the community, he couldn't before, and continually assess their needs.

The biggest challenge that we have faced so far is getting the community to want our involvement. There has been much positive feedback from within the village, but many don't yet

understand our true purpose, and what their roles and responsibilities are/could or should be. So these experiences have lead us to want to focus on 4 key points to address these issues, and they are detailed on the following pages.

1. Community Strength Building

The village currently has no group which represents the whole community and takes responsibility and actions on very important issues. Our time within the community, and records from previous NGO's who have worked in the village have shown that a lack of leadership or control in the community has prevented them from going forward in developmental, educational and economic terms.

In April and May 2009 after much consulting and discussing, it was decided that such a group had to be formed, and in May a community meeting was held and members chosen.

Though many villagers want our help, currently they lack confidence due to inexperience, and it's our aim to assist them in any way we can. Therefore, we will continue to work with the community and provide as much guidance and support, giving this group (local NGO) the chance to make a difference from within, and to take responsibility over their village and thrive.

2. School & Education

As stated in the previous section, the school was one of the first things we supported and is where our main focus will continue in the near future. As we see it to be a focal point within the community, and a platform to build from.

The experiences during the teacher training in April 2009 helped us understand and see for our own eyes, the problems they face in the school, it's surroundings, and within the community itself. So, below is a list of all the issues that the school is currently facing, and solutions which together with the community group, the Project can resolve.

ISSUE 1 - The school has no easy access to water, which affects the children and teachers both in drinking terms and sanitation needs.

>> **SOLUTION** - *Build an infrastructure from the nearest water source, with the main purpose of providing water to the school, and helping any other parts of this community or another en route.*

ISSUE 2 - The 2 Government paid teachers are not trained adequately, and lack enthusiasm and willingness to make a change in the school and community. Thus, the 3 Project paid teachers struggle due to no leadership given by the government paid headteacher, and their own lack of teaching experience.

>> **SOLUTION** - *Mon and some members of the community group approach the local district, education office, and apply to convert the school into a community school supported by The Project (this gives more power to the community as to decisions made relative to the school, curriculum, teachers, training etc). Also, ask to replace the existing government teachers, and find enthusiastic and preferably experienced replacements, and push for as much support as they can receive from the government, allowing Project money to be saved and used where help is not available.*

ISSUE 3 - Parents are not aware of the importance of education, thus, do not put pressure onto the teachers or children, resulting in bad teaching practices and poor school attendance (previous year's record showing an average of just 55% of students turning up daily to classes).

>> **SOLUTION** - *To put on awareness programmes and have community involvement with school's activities. Holding various cultural and educational events throughout the year and working closely between the Project, the Community Group, the parents and the School/School Committee.*

ISSUE 4 - Lack of facilities and space within the school grounds to teach and learn, cook school lunch, and to store caretaker's cleaning materials and tools.

>> **SOLUTION** - *Build a new school building with the necessary facilities including a library and kitchen, two very important rooms the school doesn't currently have. Also, construct an outbuilding for the caretaker to keep his equipment safely stored in, to reduce the risk of things becoming lost or stolen.*

ISSUE 5 - Lack of resources to teach and learn to a high standard, such as teaching/learning aids, furniture, books and other classroom materials.

>> **SOLUTION** - *Link with a school in a developed country (UK or Australia) to provide fundraising for such resources, and most importantly create a cultural exchange that children in both countries can learn and benefit from the experience. Also, as mentioned in Solution 4, building a library would create a space to store books and other learning aids and resources.*

3. Water

As mentioned in School & Education above, the most important issue is to provide an adequate and clean water supply to the school as soon as possible, it is our priority! The village as a whole has many issues with water, for drinking, sanitation and irrigation. These issues are sure to take many years to resolve, and together with the community we have created a series of phases to implement. The first phase is providing water to the school and infrastructure to the surrounding community or communities.

This Phase, Phase 1 has already been started, but is in the early stages of planning between the Project, the Community group, and any others involved. Once an accurate survey, detailed budget, and plan has been created, and funding found, it can be implemented straight away.

After completion, the Project's goal along with the Community Group is to develop the additional phases, which include improving and creating new infrastructures in two additional areas of the community/village, creating efficient irrigation, constructing sanitation stations (that include toilets, clothe washing and shower facilities, and more taps), and creating bio-sand filters for clean drinking water in the home. There will be more detailed information supplied when plans are put forward.

4. Health & Sanitation

The last and also very key point deals with Health and Sanitation within the village community. It has already been studied that one of the main causes of illness within the village is due to poor sanitation.

So already Jolana in May 2009 put forward plans to arrange a Health and Sanitation Awareness Day. This would involve bringing 20 student nurses to perform in front of the villagers, on topics such as Pre and Post natal care, HIV and Aids, Family Planning and washing hands properly before preparing and eating food.

Also Jolana, has planned in the middle of June to take many of the villagers (those who sign up) to the nearest large town, Bandipur, to visit a doctor in the hospital for a general health check. If anything is found that requires further work we can investigate further.

At the time of writing this document this awareness day has just occurred, and was very successful for all involved. With great results, our future plans are to continue working on various Health and Sanitation issues. Such as, encouraging the need for more Health

Workers in and around the community of Aandhimul, whether bringing such people in from outside the community or training from within. Much planning and research/study needs to take place first, but could really help with areas such as family planning and natal care, pre and post birth.

As mentioned in the water section, sanitation stations could be built in this community. But first, research and planning need to take place before commencing a pilot programme.

4. Our immediate & continuing plans for this community

1. **COM-001 – Community Strength Building & Support**
2. **SCH-001 – School Support - Wages**
3. **SCH-002 – School Support - Lunch (Khadja)**
4. **PRO-001 – Nepal Project Coordinator's Wage**
5. **WAT-001 – Water Phase I - Water to School**
6. **HES-001 – Health & Sanitation Awareness Day**
7. **HES-002 – General Health Checks with Doctor**
8. **SCH-003 – Conversion to Community School**
9. **SCH-004 – New School Building & Facilities**
10. **SCH-005 – School Materials & Resources Fundraising & Cultural Exchange**

To see time scales please view - [The Aandhimul Project Timeline June 09 - December 2010.pdf](#)

Please view website for more details www.aandhimulproject.org/the_programmes/current.html

5. Future plans within this community

11. **HES-003 – Health Workers in and Around Aandhimul**
12. **WAT-002 – Water Phase II - South of Village**
13. **COM-002 – Sustainable Local Economy**
14. **HES-004 – Sanitation Station Pilot**

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Please view website for more details www.aandhimulproject.org/the_programmes/future.html