Dear Friends,

We’ve been so busy that we’ve had no time to report to you, which, of course is exactly when we should be getting out the news. I want to catch up a bit on our work in Nepal. As you recall, we are working with the village of Tintale and Playing for Change to create an Arts & Education campus including a high school, vocational school, performance center and medical clinic.

**Site Visit & Reception in Nepal**

In March, I went with William Aura (PFC Regional Director) to the village of Tintale. My task was to evaluate local resources and to assess the potential costs of the project to guide Groundwork’s design work and Playing for Change’s fund raising efforts. I had a wonderful reception and got to know many of the villagers and understand many of their concerns.

**Conventional Construction is Too Expensive**

I gathered information on local materials, the water and sanitation situation, and construction practices. Crucially, I was able to make a reasonable estimate of costs for our project using the conventional concrete construction that people expect. The cost was high and presented two problems: 1) It was probably too much for PFC to raise and was totally beyond what the village could do, and 2) Even if PFC raised the funds, it would not be an example that other villages could afford and follow.

**We Propose Building With Local Materials**

Groundwork’s approach is to use the resources that the community has within its own control, local materials and the community’s labor. Using this approach, we could cut the project cost in half.
Would the village agree to provide the labor for the campus and also the locally available materials? This approach involved using improved versions of traditional building methods and materials, including bamboo and earth, that are not associated with wealth and western development. I didn’t know if the village would agree. We set up a meeting with the village Management Committee and put out the idea. The village would provide the labor and the local materials. PFC would undertake to provide some of the cash items that the village could not make itself, such as cement or solar panels and electrical wire. I was a little surprised that the Management committee enthusiastically accepted the idea. In any event, it became our new strategy.

Village Likes the Idea. Participation is Strong.

I wanted to make sure that there was full understanding and agreement, so I prepared a written statement of our agreement and sent it to the village Management Committee for their approval and confirmation. They called and confirmed the agreement. A bit apologetically, I said, that although in the village a person’s word was as good as a contract, that for us signatures were important. Would they please sign the agreement and send it back? In a few days Shyam, one of the village leaders called me. He said, “I have 50 signatures on the agreement. Is that enough? I can get 50 more.” I had to laugh, as I had only expected signature from the Management Committee.

Agreement to provide labor and local materials, with signatures from 50 villagers

200 Volunteers. The villagers were going to provide the labor, but they have other obligations, to care for their crops, their home and family. I wanted to know how much labor they were realistically able to supply. I asked Shyam. He talked to the village and replied back. 200 people can work 2 days a week for 8 hours/day! This had to be between October and April, as their time was full after April.
I am amazed by the level of cooperation in the village and people’s sense of community and common purpose.

I might have been skeptical of this promise, but I am reassured by the fact that the community has a 10-year track record of building its existing elementary school from 16 students under a tree to 200 students in 10 classrooms. They have energy, cooperation and dedication.
We’ve made a lot of progress since this time. We’ll tell you more in the next newsletter.

Land being considered for the campus site

Students in their school yard.

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