

Educate the Children
Primary School Improvement Project in Dolakha District, Nepal
Supported by NCNC

Introduction

More than one year after the devastating earthquakes of spring 2015, most Dolakha students are still studying in either tents or temporary buildings, in classrooms exposed to the elements and susceptible to heat, cold, dust, and noise. The national government has not yet put into effect any comprehensive policies and procedures for school rebuilding, and although the general understanding has been that each school will receive the equivalent of \$1,500, that will not be nearly enough to rebuild even one classroom, much less an entire school. Moreover, shortages of and higher prices for building materials pose a real challenge to the process of rebuilding schools and all other destroyed buildings.

In this context, and with a view to ensuring a safer and more comfortable learning environment for young children, ETC has been constructing two-room Permanent Learning Centers (PLCs) in four primary schools in Dolakha District, with the generous financial support of the Nepal Center of North Carolina (NCNC). Beneficiary schools are:

- Guranse and Deurali Primary Schools in Lapilang VDC,
- Janakalyan Primary School in Lamidanda VDC, and
- Saptamai Primary School in Babare VDC.

Process

Planning and permissions: The initial steps involved a series of meetings between ETC personnel and the relevant government and community groups, including the Dolakha District Education Office and the four school's management committees and parent-teacher associations. The meetings were focused on obtaining formal approval to do the work, as well as planning the design and materials implementation procedures. This process took a few months. At that time, no other schools in Dolakha District had PLCs, and very few do even now.

Construction: Immediately after gaining the necessary approvals in early February 2016, ETC began working at three of the four targeted schools. Work at Janakalyan PS commenced in March 2016.

The PLC designs were based on such factors as the number of students enrolled and the size of land plots available for building. They are sturdier than the destroyed buildings and far more weather-resistant and less noisy than the temporary facilities. They are well-ventilated and naturally lit inside, and many white boards line the walls for students' use in various teacher-directed and self-directed activities.

The status of the project at each school is as follows:

- At Guranse, the work is 100% complete according to plan. The classrooms are 15 feet square by 7 feet high (ceiling height). Recently a team of observers including representatives from the Dolakha District Education Office, Dolakha District Development Committee, Dolakha District

Administration Office, and three major political parties went to observe the Guranse PLC. They were impressed with our design, which is cost effective, child-friendly, quake-resistant, and appropriate for its rural setting. They also said it can be a model for other schools in the district, and it is hoped that representatives from other schools in the area will come to see it.

- At Deurali, all work is completed according to plan except for the painting, which will be accomplished as soon as possible. The classroom size is 16 feet by 17 feet, with a 7-foot ceiling.
- At Janakalyan, the work is about 75% completed. It has proved very difficult to do construction work of any kind in Lamidanda VDC, in large part because of the severe water shortages in the winter and spring. Yet to be completed are the wall plastering and painting. This work will be completed as soon as possible, given the constraints of the monsoon season. Room size is 20 feet by 24 feet with 8-foot ceilings.
- At Saptamai, all work is completed according to plan. The rooms are 18 feet square with 7-foot ceilings.

Below are some photos, taken both during the building process and since completion.



Deurali Primary School



Deurali, inside



Saptamai Primary school



Saptamai, inside



Janakalyan Primary school



Guranse Primary School

Financial information

The table below gives the average costs incurred per school. The exchange rate has ranged between approximately 106.3 rupees/dollar and 109.1 rupees/dollar during the construction period, for a monthly average of 107.4, which is the figure used in converting from rupees to dollars below. Please note that actual expenses were considerably higher than originally expected, such that it cost approximately \$5,710 to build one two-room building and another \$931 to furnish/supply it and provide recreational materials as per the original plan. This was due to ongoing and significant increases in the cost of building materials, for which there is very high demand and relatively short supply.

Expenses per school:

Item	Cash from NCNC & ETC	Community Contribution (in-kind)	Total (in rupees)	Total (in dollars, rounded to nearest whole dollar)
Cement	Rs. 38,000	-	Rs. 38,000	\$354
Stone	Rs. 20,000	Rs. 20,000	Rs. 40,000	\$372
Windows	Rs. 21,000	-	Rs. 21,000	\$196
Doors	Rs. 13,000	-	Rs. 13,000	\$121
Wood	Rs. 80,000	Rs. 40,000	Rs. 120,000	\$1,117
Iron	Rs. 80,000	-	Rs. 80,000	\$745
Skilled and unskilled labor	Rs. 70,000	Rs. 42,000	Rs. 112,000	\$1,043
Painting	Rs. 12,500	-	Rs. 12,500	\$116
Plywood	Rs. 78,000	-	Rs. 78,000	\$726
Plain metal sheets	Rs. 15,750	-	Rs. 15,750	\$147
Colored CGI sheets	Rs. 40,500	-	Rs. 40,500	\$377
Sand	Rs. 17,500	-	Rs. 17,500	\$163
Other materials	Rs. 5,000	-	Rs. 5,000	\$47
Transportation	Rs. 20,000	-	Rs. 20,000	\$186
TOTAL, building costs	Rs. 511,250	Rs. 102,000	Rs. 613,250	\$5,710

Furniture and rec. materials	Rs. 100,000	-	Rs. 100,000	\$931
Grand total, all costs	Rs. 611,250	Rs. 102,000	Rs. 713,250	\$6,641

The total cash needed for this project has been Rs. 611,250 or approximately \$5,691 per school, for a combined four-school total of \$22,764. At this time, we have expended the entire amount of \$15,656 generously provided by NCNC.

Summary

Despite the numerous challenges, the project has been very successful. The Dolakha District Education Office, school personnel, parents, and students are all very pleased with the results. Other schools in our program area are eager to have PLCs built on their campuses, and we intend to accommodate as many of them as possible. ETC is extraordinarily grateful to NCNC for your support of this important project, which will benefit hundreds of young children every year beginning immediately and for the foreseeable future.