

NCEF GYAN

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NEPALESE CHILDREN'S EDUCATION FUND

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gyan: *n.* knowledge acquired
by direct perception

THE 2007 NCEF SELECTION COMMITTEE REPORT

By: Mr. Uttam Sharma

The 2007 Selection Committee members started their work in November 2006, after receiving the go ahead from the Executive Committee to start the selections process. Om Prakash Gnawali, Steven Lustig, Anil Pachhai (outside member), Shreejana Pokharel, Laura Satkamp (outside member), Uttam Sharma, and Jay Shrestha make up the 2007 Selections Committee. Aside from the two noted outside members, all other members of the committee have served in at least one previous selection committee.

This year we selected 16 new students from a pool of 42 students that were “pre-selected” by these areas in the following three districts: Nepalgunj, Palpa and Patan. We adopted a new system of voting this year. Instead of assigning points to each new candidate, the selection committee members ranked candidates within each district and the top five (six in Palpa) candidates were selected. It was reassuring to see almost near consensus when identifying the top five students from each district. Though minor changes are necessary, there seemed to be a general feeling that this selections method is an improvement over the point system employed in previous years.

The filled application forms were scanned and then e-mailed to selection committee. Then we organized the documents on the website so that the committee members could log in and look at the applications. We realized that this process of gathering and managing applications can be made more organized with a few improvements. Volunteers, for instance, should only send completed applications for each student, so that the pages are not misplaced. The volunteers should also try sending one application in one e-mail or including name of the students in all pages to avoid confusion. Since this is a time consuming process, we need to look at ways to make this process as efficient as possible.

The quality of applications this year was higher than that of last year, with relatively less missing information. Earlier, we had compiled a list that specified common errors made in the past and the list was sent to each NCEF area. We tried to emphasize that missing information would only hurt the candidates. There is still plenty of room for improvements, but we are pleased to see that efforts to improve application quality resulted in fewer



mistakes this year. Our next aim is to elicit more feedback from volunteers. We have a section in the application where we want to hear the opinions of the volunteers. Most of them do not write much, if at all, so we need to convince the volunteers that they, to some extent, influence the decision if they include pertinent information that is not included elsewhere.

Based on suggestions from last year, we decided to ask each of the NCEF areas to send a couple of completed application samples so that the committee could look at them and provide details on what is missing and/or to decide if any changes in the application form would be

behind the decision to discontinue funding for children with improved financial conditions; however, further dialogue on this issue is necessary, as it could negatively affect the future of some students. We might need to develop further guidelines on this to make it as error-free as possible, and inputs from Area Coordinators could provide valuable insights.

Another challenge faced by the selection committee was in working with students who failed their exams. This past year, one student failed the exam. We had an extensive discussion about her to make sure we make the right decision. The Area Coordinator also provided us with her opinion. The fact that the student in question had some health issues persuaded the committee to continue funding her, despite her exam performance. However, this situation has shown a need for NCEF to map out a consistent approach in working with struggling students. Since NCEF invests a lot in each student it supports, it would make sense to develop a system that provides extra support to academically struggling students. Again, input from Area Coordinators might prove to be valuable here.

We were somewhat late in sending application forms to the areas this year. We started early, but somehow became inactive in the middle of the process. Next year, we could start accepting applications much earlier, perhaps December or January, so that conditional decisions can be made before the new academic year starts. We can implement a two-prong approach, where we first deal with new students then we make decisions regarding renewal students. It is absolutely critical that we stick to a sound timetable. The present structure is exerting a lot of pressure on the Area Coordinators.

On the whole, the selection committee was pleased with the application pool this year and many of the applicants were very deserving of NCEF support. The process of choosing this year's NCEF students was definitely a rewarding experience for all members of the 2007 Selection Committee.



MAKING DONATIONS

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Questions?

Website: www.nepalchildren.org

Email: contact@nepalchildren.org

THANK YOU!

WHAT ARE CHILDREN DOING?

Sujal in Nepalgunj was thrilled to receive first prize on Education Day!

Nisha in Nepalgunj was proud when she answered her teacher's twenty questions very quickly

Trishna was happy when teacher said 'good job' when she recited multiplication tables.

Meet Kopila, a New NCEF Student

Kopila is a new NCEF student from Patan. Since her father passed away from a heart attack, her family has been living in the premises of a temple. Despite her lack of education, Kopila's mother Kamala is eager to educate her daughter and her son Pukar. Working as a housemaid, Kamala attempts to support the basic needs of her children with a very small income. Teachers have noted that Kopila comes to school without lunch because her mother cannot afford to buy one. Yet, she is ranked first in her class, with "distinction." Kopila's cost of attendance is approximately US\$100 per year, and her mother's income is US \$180 per year. Pukar's cost of attendance is also similar to Kopila's. In spite of such a tight budget and her growing health problems, Kopila and Pukar's mother is ensuring her children receive an education. Her dedication to educate her children and make them "useful members of the society" is truly amazing and commendable. Generous contribution by NCEF donors and volunteers in the US and in Nepal has helped and will continue to provide opportunities for more *Kopilas*. Kopila, the Nepali word for young flower buds, is a fitting name as NCEF aims to nurture the youth of Nepal to truly blossom.



GETTING INVOLVED

Why?

- To make a lasting difference in the lives of children.
- To be a part of an exciting team of interesting and dedicated volunteers.
- To put your spare time, no matter how little, to good use.

How?

- **Join** our announcements list!
- Help fundraise money for NCEF scholarships.
- Help with the administrative aspects of NCEF.
- Take part in discussions to ensure NCEF is increasingly effective.
- Help expand NCEF to new areas in Nepal
- Become a field volunteer in Nepal.
- Help lead NCEF by running for a position on the Board or Executive Committee.

ABOUT NCEF

NCEF is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to develop the potential of disadvantaged Nepalese children through education. Need-based scholarships are provided to deserving students who would otherwise be unable to attend school. Our social workers in Nepal meet regularly with the selected children and their parents to assist in each child's development. We dedicate our resources to each NCEF child until they complete high school (twelfth grade).

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NCEF PAMPHLET

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