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Peace Fellow 2014
CONCERN-Nepal
Kathmandu, Nepal
September, 2014

CONCERN for Children and Environment – Nepal

The past month at CONCERN has been extremely eventful! I have been busy familiarizing myself with CONCERN's past work, current projects and their goals for the future. The team here is an engaging, energetic group that I feel so fortunate to work with. I have already learned more than I could have ever imagined in just a few short weeks. From going on field visits – to meeting with ambassadors – to continually writing and editing grant proposals – each day is always different.

Introduction

CONCERN has been working for the rights of Children since 1993 focusing specifically on child labor. CONCERN has been a leading organization in research and development towards the rights of children in Nepal and continues to take innovative approaches to their work.

CONCERN is currently wrapping up a very successful three year project with Save the Children International that reached over 2,000 children. They are also in the developing stages of creating a new three-year program that aims to eradicate child labor in seven brick kilns in the two districts of Bhaktapur and Lalitpur. The program aims to eliminate child labor through education, empowerment, and economic sustainability. I am privileged to be a part of the development of this new project and share key ways of my involvement:

Field Visits

Field visits have been vital to deepening my understanding of the work CONCERN does, and to gain a better understanding of the new the program in development. I visited seven brick kilns that CONCERN currently works with facilitating non-formal education classes, daycare center services, vocational training support, and income generation alternatives.

The field visits to the brick kilns in the two districts of Bhaktapur and Lalitpur where there are nearly 200 brick kilns opened my eyes to the grave conditions of labor in brick kilns. CONCERN works in seven different brick kilns and in the past three years has reached over 2,000 children providing alternative options and support. During one of my field visits I interviewed two children who have been part of CONCERN's 'Income Generation Program'. The



Ramesh, part of the Income Generation Program, now runs a small restaurant instead of working in the brick kilns

program provides children, adolescents, and families alternative options for income. From goat farming – to selling fruit – to restaurant management, the program focuses on the individual's interests. It supports them in starting their new, non-labor intensive career by providing the supplies needed and financial assistance.



CONCERN provides education support to these children giving them the opportunity to attend school

The field visits to the brick kilns has also given me the opportunity to create content for CONCERN's partner page on The Advocacy Project's website which will eventually lead to online donations and fundraising. Through powerful pictures and interviews we will be able to share the scope of CONCERN's work, the immense impact, and success stories to strengthen their online presence raising awareness and ultimately nurture fund-raising goals.

Organizations and Embassy Meetings

My main focus in this area is coordinating meetings with organizations and ambassadors from embassies to introduce the long-term program CONCERN is developing. I attend the meetings with the Executive Director seeking advice and recommendations on the project. A key component in these endeavors is to prompt interest in financially supporting the project. We tactfully ask the ambassador to raise the issue of child labor in Nepal with government officials. Since my fellowship with CONCERN we have met with USAID and the embassies of Britain, Finland, Germany, Israel, and Japan. The meetings have gone very well and we've obtained valuable recommendations. We are now drafting proposals to the organizations and embassies to support areas of the larger project to be implemented in 2015.

Grant Proposal Writing

Part of my fellowship in Nepal has been the development of a proposal that will rescue twelve children from the brick kilns this year and provide them the financial support to attend school. CONCERN will provide their admission fees, exam fees, uniform, backpack, and school supplies. Upon finalization of the proposal, The Advocacy Project will launch a campaign partnering with a school in Washington D.C to support the project.

Long-Term Program

I have also been assisting in the continuation of developing the long-term program that aims to the eradicate child labor in the seven brick kilns by 2018. The goal is for the program to launch in early 2015. The focus of this program is education support, empowerment, and economic sustainability.

Moving Forward

The brick-making season will start again in a few weeks and because the project with Save the Children International ended in August, we are looking for small grants to

maintain four crucial activities until the end of the year. This means that I will continue to research potential grants that CONCERN would be eligible for and continue to write and edit proposals. As the season starts, I will go back to the brick kilns for more field visits. At this time we will assess how many children are working in the brick kilns this season and what the needs are for all involved including employers, parents, and the children. CONCERN prides itself on having a strong relationship with employers and parents, which enables them to work with the children. We will also continue meeting with organizations and ambassadors requesting recommendations and potential financial assistance to fund the new project. This week we will be meeting with Solidarity Center and UNICEF, and are waiting for confirmation to meet with Action Aid Nepal and Danish and Norwegian ambassadors.

I will continue to research multiple organizations and meet with various embassies to develop ongoing relationships. I will also establish an extensive donor database before the end of my fellowship. The donor database will include all of the organizations and embassies that we have met with and will include the dates, contact information, meeting notes, and follow-up needed for each particular organization and embassy.

I anticipate a very busy, engaging and fulfilling next five weeks with CONCERN. I continue to learn and grow every day and feel my work here is incredibly useful and valued. I am so grateful to Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation for supporting this project and I look forward to sharing further progress in my next report.