



Volunteers Initiative Nepal (ViN)

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Project: Reconstruction and DRR

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Nishenke, Nepal

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1. Introduction

For eight weeks, I had the opportunity to participate in a humanitarian mission in Nepal, dedicated to construction projects in local communities. This experience allowed me to contribute to essential initiatives while discovering the cultural richness and daily challenges of residents. This report presents an overview of the activities carried out, the results obtained, as well as the lessons learned from this mission.

2. Project Background, achievements and outcomes

2.1 Project description and volunteer role

For the reconstruction and disaster risk reduction (DRR) program, we were a team of four volunteers. We divided the tasks among ourselves as efficiently as possible to ensure smooth and effective progress.

Work at the CLC

The initial phase of our project was conducted at the Community Learning Center (CLC). Our primary goal was to prepare the CLC site to host the maximum number of volunteers in the best possible conditions.

A. Final finishing works:

When we arrived, the construction of the CLC was already well advanced, and some finishing works remained in certain parts of the building. Consequently, we took on the tasks of organizing the hall and clearing the debris in the area designated for the future elevator.

After organizing, another finishing task was to sand and repaint all the exterior barriers surrounding the site. The objective was to ensure that the site looked appealing for the local communities and volunteers. We spent a week on this task, updating around ten barriers. However, the work was tiring and took a lot of time, and there were other more urgent tasks that needed to be done. So, we soon started working on creating new spaces within the center.

B. Creation of the Meeting Room:

I worked for two weeks in the brand-new meeting room. My work was divided into three main stages. First, to ensure a clean and high-quality finish, I hammered in the nails and applied wood filler to conceal them. Next, to achieve a smooth and even surface, I sanded the entire wood in the room. Finally, to protect the wood and give it a glossy finish, I applied varnish across the whole room.



The meeting room is now fully finished, spotlessly clean and ready for use. This room benefits from a refined finish and offers an ideal environment for future meetings of the association.

C. Creation of new rooms for future volunteers:

Some additional missions were given to me to allow the finalization of the rooms located on the top floor of the CLC. Firstly, to ensure smooth walls by removing imperfections, wall putty was applied to all room walls. Then, to eliminate any impurities and excess dust that could harm the final appearance of the walls, we sanded all the surfaces. Finally, once the walls were cleaned, other volunteers and workers painted the rooms.

At the same time, I happened to carry out several exterior painting jobs, particularly the painting of the balcony, the roofs and the walls surrounding the solar panels.

Today, the top floor of the CLC is fully completed and fully functional. Future volunteers can now stay in the new rooms in the best possible conditions. Additionally, the building is not only beautiful and clean, but also provides a welcoming and functional space for everyone.



Gray water management in the Kéolini community:

After finishing our work at the CLC, we wanted to help the community directly. We then had the opportunity to assist the members of the Kéolini community. VIN had already built water tanks to provide residents with water for their daily needs. In addition, the project organizations came up with the idea of creating wastewater reservoirs to reuse the water for crop irrigation. We worked on this project for a week, focusing on digging and setting up the reservoirs to support the community's agricultural efforts.

We were called upon to work on two reservoirs. The first one had already been dug and constructed, but the dimensions did not meet the requirements. We had to dismantle the existing structure to enlarge the hole and meet the required dimensions. We also took the opportunity to install a pipe to direct the water straight to the crops. Due to time constraints, it was the community members who rebuilt the reservoir in the new hole.

Next, we dug a second hole for another group of residents to provide them with a wastewater reservoir. Once again, due to lack of time, the locals completed the construction of the reservoir after the hole was finished.



Today, the community members have access to water and wastewater reservoirs that allow them to reuse the water for crop irrigation, thereby improving their living conditions and agricultural efficiency.

Works in the community of Badorre:

For the last two weeks of our project, we worked on a site near the Badorre community. This ambitious project aims to provide residents with access to water through a large reservoir, which can also be used in case of fire. Additionally, the project includes the region's first public toilet and facilitates access to the local temple.

Our main task was to clean the drains of accumulated debris and address the landslides that were blocking them. We dug for two weeks to ensure better water flow in case of rain.

Thanks to our efforts, we helped the workers advance more quickly on the project and contributed to creating a functional space for the residents. The site is now close to being fully operational and will provide essential facilities that will be of great benefit to the community.



2.2 Community impact

Particularly during the first weeks, it was difficult to realize our impact on the communities because we were working in the Community Learning Center. Obviously, our work had an impact, initially, enabling the development of the association through its infrastructures. We helped to expand this center so that it can accommodate even more volunteers in the future and improve their comfort. These new volunteers will contribute to the development of communities in a more direct way (teaching, agriculture, technology development, etc.) and it is partly thanks to us that they will be able to provide this assistance in this region. In addition, the CLC is also made to welcome local populations whether for teaching children or adults, in the future VIN would also like to create a hospital within this center. We therefore contribute to the comfort and quality of education provided by the CLC to local populations.

Secondly, our work in the community of Kéolini, although it was short-lived, was useful for this community, which had to finish the construction of their water tanks as quickly as possible to then start the harvest in their fields.

Finally, the last weeks of work on the site near the community of Badorre allowed us to evacuate the earth and rock present in the ditches as well as the landslides. Our work therefore allows the flow of water along the road which borders this site, in a region where water can be scarce during certain periods, it is important that all infrastructure is optimized in order to distribute water throughout the site. the different communities, that was the objective of our work. In addition, the landslides prevented access to the rest area that had been built, people also had to walk on the landslides to be able to cross this space, thanks to us, this access is now accessible to everyone.

3. Personal and professional development

3.1 Skills and knowledge gained

During this experience, most of the tasks we had to carry out did not require any skills (sanding, painting, digging, etc.), however we still acquired some skills that we did not have before arriving, such as laying concrete. parquet or apply interior coating. Particularly on the last construction site near Badorre, the workers did not try to teach us but preferred that we not do it if we did not know how to do it (example: with the construction of stairs and stone walls). It's a shame in my opinion because we couldn't learn new skills to help them in their work.

Finally, the most important knowledge acquired for me is the understanding and discovery of a culture so rich and different from ours. Speaking on a daily basis with people who have a lifestyle so different from mine allowed me to take a step back from the way I lived but also to discover customs, ways of living, extremely interesting daily lives despite a majority population poor.

3.2 Reflection

A memorable moment for me would be the evening when we went to dinner with two other volunteers in the house of a worker we met during our project. This man, Pitamber, lives with his wife and three children in the suburbs of Kathmandu in a house made of bamboo and steel sheets. We were welcomed with remarkable hospitality, each member of his family was extremely happy to welcome us, we were able to chat thanks to his daughter who spoke English. This meeting was wonderful, despite financial and health problems, this family is happy and lives with those they have without complaint. This is a great lesson for our society, we who always wish to have more, to do more things and who complain easily, it puts things into perspective and shows us that everyday problems which sometimes seem insurmountable to us are only details compared to these people, who

sometimes cannot fill their plates or access care as easily as we do. Many other moments like this made me realize how lucky we are to be in good health and to live in a rich country in good conditions.

4. Challenges and solutions

4.1 Challenges faced

There were not really any problems encountered during the period of work in the CLC, the tasks that we had to carry out were clear and we were progressing a little more each day on these tasks. The only small challenges that could be encountered were with tasks that we had never carried out before such as for the laying of plaster, where the workers explained to us how to do it, and that of the parquet floor, where we found out on the internet. As for our work on the Badorre site, the main problem was linked to the landslides which slowed down our progress. We therefore proposed to clear certain parts of the landslides and install walls so that this would not happen again. This could be done in place, but we did not have time to put it in place all around the potential landslide.



4.2 Problem-solving strategies

When we arrived at the CLC, we wanted to set up a list of tasks to be carried out so that the next volunteers would know what to do without necessarily having to ask the VIN teams how they could be useful. We first created a table with the list of tasks to be done, their progress, their importance, etc., this idea was taken up by other volunteers who created a large poster on which all these tasks were listed, and everyone could assign yourself to it by marking your first name. It's a good thing that was created there so that the volunteers could have an overall vision of what needs to be done, because

when we arrived, we didn't have this vision, and we sometimes woke up without knowing what we were going to do during our day.

Another problem solving on our job site in Badorre would be the time we had to evacuate the earth from a landslide. The workers wanted us to bring all the earth down in bags, this would have taken a lot of time and would have been extremely physically complicated, so we created a ramp using steel sheets to make it much easier to evacuate this earth. This is a solution that saved us a lot of time and energy.



5. Feedback for VIN

5.1 Project feedback

For this type of project, setting up a table where all the tasks to be carried out are listed is a good thing, it saves time for both the volunteers and the VIN staff. The organization is very important, we see that each member of VIN listens to the volunteers and that is an excellent thing, now bringing more organization with a detailed list of all the projects in progress is something that needs to be maintained.

A second interesting point is that of the weekly meetings which allow you to take a step back from your project to be able to explain it to other volunteers and to keep up to date with other projects underway in the association. It's an interesting moment for everyone, it also allows us to discuss topics of everyday life in the CLC, it's a moment that must be preserved.

5.2 Support and resources

The drive which is made available for volunteers is a good initiative, it allows us to group together the progress of each project, the studies carried out, the reports and even technical documents.

However, when we arrived, we did not have direct access to this drive, each volunteer must be integrated quickly and everyone must be aware of the importance of this tool, it must be maintained by each, well organized and explained by VIN upon our arrival so that everyone can use what was done before. I had the feeling that this drive was not used by everyone and that some were carrying out work or studies previously carried out by others.

As far as we were concerned on the construction sites, we had access to protective equipment such as gloves or surgical masks, this equipment was not of very good quality and which we had in limited quantity (especially for the gloves that we wore out quickly). I know that this is expensive, but it is important for me to have a substantial stock of safety equipment (masks adapted to construction site dust, better quality gloves, possibly safety shoes depending on the construction site, safety glasses). protection...). It is crucial that volunteers feel completely safe during their work, and this requires suitable equipment. I would still like to reassure by saying that this equipment was sufficient for the work we carried out (but perhaps not for all types of work) and that the VIN teams placed great importance on our safety by not letting us perform any task in any condition.

6. Recommendations for future volunteers

About projects, don't hesitate to ask any questions, be curious, don't wait for things to come to you but rather take matters into your own hands. When I arrived at the CLC, I felt a little lost, not knowing exactly what I was going to do and how I could be useful, asking questions and discussing with the members of VIN allowed me to better orient myself on my missions and to see what I could bring to the association. We should also not hesitate to say if there are things on which we do not agree or if there are parts of our project that we do not like, the members of VIN are attentive and they will try to make you feel good in the association, if you communicate obviously.

Apart from the projects, it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience (at least for me), so don't hesitate to step out of your comfort zone, discussing and exchanging with Nepalese people is extremely enriching, everyone has a lot to learn from others. Going out, discovering cities and populations, that's where we have the most to learn, all these experiences allow us to take a step back from ourselves and the way we live.

7. Appendices

Here is the link to our Instagram account created with Jules CHIMOT on which we can find photos or videos showing the progress of our projects as well as the moments experienced during these two months: [BricoNépalais](#)

8. Conclusion

This experience was extremely enriching, particularly on a human level, the meetings and visits I made allowed me to see the world differently, to realize that around this earth, we do not all have the same luck, our access to education, health, leisure, travel... are things that are not accessible to everyone. Realizing this makes us take a step back from our lives, it makes us humbler and allows us to see the inequalities that exist. In addition to personal development, being able to help these populations, at least on my scale, was a pleasure for me. It's an adventure and encounters that I will never forget, I even think that each person should be able to have this experience at least once in their life to realize that the way we live is not universal and that It's an opportunity that must be taken advantage of.

I thank the various members of VIN, particularly Cholindra BAHADUR KARKI, Bhupendra GHIMIRE and Sunita GHIMIRE, for their listening and their help in our project. I also thank my friend Jules CHIMOT with whom we worked together for two months and who without him, this experience would not have been the same.