

News November 2009:

PHASE Clinical Guidelines to be used widely in Nepal.

PHASE doctors Renu Prasai (Kathmandu) and Gerda Pohl (Rotherham) have been working on a set of clinical guidelines for rural health workers in Nepali language for many years, in cooperation with some other doctors and organisations. PHASE health workers have been using these and giving feedback ever since PHASE started. With the help of a grant from the Eric Gambrell Foundation, it became possible to get the guidelines ready for print, and the British Medical Association (Charitable purposes fund) contributed enough funds to make it possible for PHASE to distribute 1,000 copies for free.

These will mainly go to the rural health posts in 10 hill districts, and will also be used by the governmental National Health Training Centre and the Nick Simons Institute, a large NGO working in the development of rural health in Nepal.

The guidelines were officially launched in Kathmandu on 3rd November (see pictures)



1 guideline launch event



2 Arjun Singh (NHTC) presenting book

As a consequence of launching the guidelines, we have been in touch with several smaller organisations which work in health in Nepal, and we have now agreed to put together a resource pack for such organisations, to help them set up primary care services, avoiding mistakes and ensuring effective management. It will give advice on how to work with the government, how to select health workers, what equipment and drugs are needed and how to supervise and support health workers.

New health workers with PHASE

While Gerda was in Nepal, PHASE Nepal selected 6 new health workers to work in our remote rural health centres. PHASE health workers are selected after an advertisement in the national newspapers and job websites, and they have to attend a written exam as well as an interview. Selection is strictly by qualification / experience and motivation.

The new health workers attended a one week training together with the “old” staff which gave them the opportunity to learn about how PHASE works but also to develop the feeling of being part of a support network. The later is very important for these health workers who are sent out to work in the most isolated villages in the world...



3 PHASE health workers



4 health worker training

Possible expansion in North Gorkha

PHASE is currently working in four communities in north Gorkha, all of them more than 3 days walk from the nearest road (and the road head is a whole days' travel from Kathmandu): Sridibas and Chumchet health projects are fully funded by PHASE; and for the project which covers Bihi and Prok community, we get support from the Child Welfare Scheme.

The PHASE run health centres have developed an excellent reputation in the area, so much so that we have had several requests form neighbouring communities to start projects in their areas, too. We have not been able to respond to these requests for financial reasons, but now the situation may have changed: the District Health Officer has persuaded the district government to allocate funds towards employing health workers in each of these 7 remote communities. But he is fully aware that it takes more than just one person's salary to run a health service, and because he doesn't have the management capacity to successfully provide the monitoring and supervision needed, he has approached PHASE to work together on this.

Because we already have funding for 6 health workers in this area, we could expand the service provision to all 7 communities for very little extra money, if the cooperation with the DHO works out.

We are currently in negotiations with the district government and looking for funds for this expansion. If it does work out, this is going to be a very interesting new model of cooperation, and might provide an example for other remote areas in Nepal which are currently not being reached by the government health services.



5 local women in North Gorkha

Funding Crisis in Humla

The Nepalese Children's Foundation, the Irish donor who had approached PHASE to implement health projects in Humla, has had to cancel the contract after only 2 years, because they were unable to sustain the same levels of fundraising. This means that as of January 2010, PHASE will either have to withdraw services in Humla, or find the funds (approx 20,000 pounds per year) elsewhere.

Because Humla is by far the neediest area where PHASE works, and the health centres there see the highest number of patients and the most severe cases, we cannot consider the possibility of withdrawing services. We will soon start a concerted funding drive for the

continuation of the Humla projects, but we will also try to get the district and local governments to invest some funds into the projects.



6 Patients at Melcham (Humla)

Colposcopy Cooperation

Coordinated by PHASE and with support from the Humanitarian Fund of the British Medical Association, UK colposcopy experts have visited Nepal again:

Jane Panikkar and Sherryl Goodall from Shrewsbury and David Fenton from Rotherham visited the National Cancer Hospital in Bharatpur (near Chitwan National Park) and the national Maternity Hospital in Kathmandu. They spent time with Nepali colleagues teaching practical hands-on colposcopy in out patient clinics. They also delivered a workshop with lectures about cervical cancer and colposcopy to a mixed medical audience.

This cooperation is now entering its fourth year, and the emphasis is now changing: The Maternity Hospital has developed enough to be able to train up Nepali colposcopists directly, and The National Cancer Hospital has decided to send at least two nurses to the UK for training.

There will probably still be visits from UK experts to Nepal, but these will probably concentrate more on development of training centres within Nepal.

Picture to follow

GP trainers with PHASE

For the first year, PHASE is piloting a scheme where British experienced GPs spend 1-3 weeks in health projects. They spend time supervising PHASE health workers and teaching clinical skills. They work with the PHASE guidelines and address specific learning needs of the health workers, who have very basic qualifications, but perform the jobs of a GP, community nurse, midwife and pharmacist combined. The first four new GP trainers (Dr

Deepa Bala, Dr Wendy Abrams, Dr David Loveday and Dr Mike Guildford) have been to two PHASE villages, and so far the experience has been very positive.



7 GP trainer in Fulpinkot