

A REPORT INTO THE SHRI JALDEVI & ALDERMAN WHITE SCHOOL LINKING PROJECT

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A report commissioned by PHASE Worldwide to review the current status of the school link and to assess its potential. The report is based on Action Research carried out during a one month visit to Hagam village, Sindhupalchok, Nepal.

SUMMARY

- What is School linking?...Building a friendship between two schools from different communities or cultures. ‘A Link is an opportunity to explore our cultural baggage and to transform our understanding of the world in order to create new ways of being, seeing, knowing and thinking.’
- In general, the attitude of the students and teachers in Hagam is very encouraging. Everyone is incredibly interested to learn about the UK school, life in the UK and British culture. Attitudes are more varied amongst the teachers but it is hoped that as the program develops and opportunities accrue, they will become more involved.
- The physical, human and information based resources currently available at Shri Jaldevi School are minimal. There are no teaching aids other than textbooks, no access to information about the wider world and teachers have no formal training. In order for the school to enter into a school linking partnership on a more equal basis it is vital that an investment is made into the resources at the school.
- Based on experience of carrying out the development education activities, it is evident that the students are able to adapt to new types of activities and learning, prompting the use of independent thinking, reasoning and problem solving.
- The school-linking will provide many opportunities to help develop aspirations and ensure the achievement of the students in Hagam that the current curriculum and teaching methods are unable to do. Confidence in the use of English will be enhanced. Basic computer skills and cross-cultural learning, thinking and reasoning skills, problem solving and creativity will all help to provide a foundation to empower students too.
- It is apparent that the visions of each stakeholder take a slightly different focus.
 - PHASE’s primary hope for the partnership is cultural exchange and the opportunity this brings to increase understanding and respect for different cultures.
 - Shri Jaldevi School is also interested in the prospect of cultural exchange and learning about life in England. Likewise, the teachers are eager to learn about teaching in the UK and exchange teaching

methods and ideas with Alderman White School. They also hope that they will benefit financially from the link.

- Alderman White School in contrast, focus less on what they can learn about Nepal and more on how the link will benefit the learning and skills development of the students, as well as increasing collaboration amongst the teachers. They have also given a lot of consideration to how the link can contribute to their school ethos.

Whilst each stakeholder emphasises a different vision, these are by no means mutually exclusive. It is important that each school is honest with the other about their goals and expectations for the partnership so that they can seek aspects of each vision that are shared and focus on the steps to achieve them.

Moving forward

1. Since teachers in Hagam have had no teacher training, help in planning lesson activities to meet creative learning objectives would be welcome. Friday afternoons have been set aside for planning sessions. PHASE could help by funding a support teacher who could create simple guides and lesson plans.
2. Communication between the two schools is essential even if it is only monthly. The internet connection is sporadic and electricity has yet to reach the village. Though e-mails, letters or telephone calls are all possible, telephone conversations are likely to be the most reliable first contact point. However, because of low levels of confidence about communicating in English, letters are possibly the best way forward to exchange ideas and updates of information at the moment.
3. Resources for Shri Jaldevi are not expensive, but are too costly for the school to obtain.
4. Awareness of world news is an issue in remote villages. Information from the Internet will be empowering but until this is more reliable, perhaps funding the purchase of a radio would help. Perhaps Alderman White students would enjoy fund raising to help with these needs?
5. Sustaining motivation for the project is the first step. Prompting regular communication in the first six months is vital. PHASE Nepal's help here could make all the difference in facilitating linking and in reviewing progress by evaluating the link at the end of the year.