

### **Ciara Rowland-Simms (Physics) – Shree Narayan School, Ichok, Nepal, Summer 2014**

I travelled to the Helambu region of Nepal during August 2014 with the international NGO Helambu Education and Livelihood Project (HELP). I stayed with a host family for 4 weeks, teaching 5 periods a day 6 days a week as a volunteer. I taught English to students aged 6-14 years in classes of up to 50, along with mathematics to students aged 14-15. With such large classes it was important to me to make sure all of the students were included. It became apparent within the first few lessons that the chant and repeat method of learning, which many of the Nepali teachers, use often meant that less able students could get away with copying their neighbours rather than learning for themselves. Setting creative work was one way I found of seeing what the students knew individually as it was obvious if they were copying off of each other. Watching the students rise to challenge of these open ended tasks and seeing some students who were originally disengaged take pride in their work was incredibly rewarding. The younger students did not have the base level English to make these types of task applicable, but I found using props and getting students to come to the board to answer questions encouraged every student to get involved. The students produced some illustrated copies of a song we had learnt. We heard them sing it around the school out of class, reinforcing their learning and having fun with it.

Living in the village I saw first-hand the effect of the great work HELP does. The school has teachers provided by the Government, but these only account for 4 of the 9 teachers at the school. The rest are sponsored by HELP, the teachers they fund are vital for the school to function. As a volunteer I was aware that my presence at the school was only a fraction of the academic year. The full time teachers are the main force to improve education in the region, and HELP does great work providing them. I tried to help this effort by speaking to teachers at the school to help improve their English, and since returning to Cambridge I have joined the CU HELP committee, recruiting and interviewing volunteers as well as fundraising for HELP itself, to allow it to continue doing it's great work in the region.