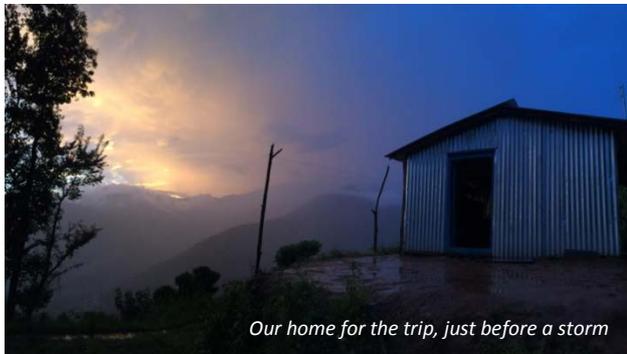


## Clo Ryan (HSPS) and Jessica Flavell (PBS) – Nepal, Summer 2016

With the help of a Pembroke travel grant, we travelled to the Sindupalchoc region of Nepal, and spent 4 weeks teaching English in a small Primary School in the tiny village of Dhodeni in the Himalayas. We volunteered with HELP, Helambu Education and Livelihood Partnership, a Nepalese NGO which aims to support schools in remote regions which often struggle with poor government funding. As a result of the recent earthquake, the conditions of the village were very poor. The locals' houses were mainly made of wood and tin, with many not having the means to build better accommodation, or being too fearful of another earthquake. They had small amounts of sporadic electricity.



*Our home for the trip, just before a storm*

the teachers, they said they where the saw a mistake, they would correct it for the class, however their level of English was poor, so often they would be unable to detect mistakes in grammar or syntax. The children were mostly enthusiastic to learn, and very responsive, if a little shy at times.

Prior to the earthquake, there were 7 classrooms, but this was reduced to 5 in the temporary school structure. This meant that one of the class groups was huge, and made up of children from 2 through to 5, which was very difficult to control. The classes also meant that there were some children in the oldest class whose abilities were above that of the lesson content, which was stifling for them, and tender to make them restless, distracting other students.



*Witch doctors performing at a festival*

We were lucky enough to have been in Dhodeni during the Hindu festival of Janai Purnima. On this day, we enjoyed celebrations with the locals including dancing and playing the drums of the witch doctors who were esteemed men in the local community, and drinking their locally made alcohol. Our status within the community was fairly high as Westerners, and we were treated the same as the important men, which was an interesting dynamic. We also spoke with the locals who questioned why we would come to Nepal when we have good lives and living conditions in our home countries, with one local saying that to Nepalese people, some of the western world is considered to be heaven.

The locals were mostly very positive about the power of education and enthusiastic to learn, and it was clear that there were divides between the younger, better educated villagers, and the older generations, in terms of willingness to unquestioningly accept religious suspicions, and beliefs about health and wellbeing.

Experiencing the way of life and culture of the local people in such a genuine way was a truly unique experience that we will never forget.

Clo Ryan and Jessica Flavell



*With some students from the school*