



Anne Meretmaa

Adventurous decade and more –
Diak's partnership in Asia

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**Diakonia-ammattikorkeakoulu
Helsinki 2012**

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ABSTRACT

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This publication is about the development of Diak's international activities since the beginning of Diak in the 1990's and about Diak's partnership in Asia. International exchange has been in the focus of Diak's studies from the beginning and developing countries have always played a major role in Diak's partnerships. Yet, their role has been expressed clearly in international strategies only since 2005.

The number of Diak's partners in Asia has increased slightly over the years but the main focus has been in three countries: India, Nepal and Vietnam. Some partnerships have been ended because they did not serve Diak's studies or partners' interests were elsewhere. The present partnerships are based on good long term practises and good knowledge of one another.

Over 400 Diak students have chosen Asia as the part of the world where they want to do their exchange. The feedback gained through these students has helped Diak in selecting and strengthening partnerships and also in serving the partners in better ways.

The North South South funded HOPE project has enlarged the partnerships into a two way movement. Since 2009 Diak has been able to invite teachers and students from Nepal and Vietnam for exchange in Finland. It has also deepened Diak's cooperation with its partner Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland.

Diak has a compulsory orientation program for all students going abroad. The program has been developed over the years to cover the cultural, personal, academic and practical needs students have in order to fulfil their tasks as Diak's students abroad.

The feedback students have given over the years and that can be read from this book shows that a few months abroad can have a life changing meaning for a student's life.

Keywords:

Student Exchange, Student Mobility, International Activities, Bangladesh, Hon Kong, India, Nepal, Vietnam

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Julkaisu käsittelee Diakin kansainvälisen toiminnan kehitystä ammattikorkeakoulun alkuvuosista lähtien sekä Diakin Aasian yhteistyön muotoutumista reilun kymmenen vuoden aikana. Opiskelijavaihto on kuulunut Diakin opinto-ohjelmaan alusta alkaen. Opiskelijoita on kannustettu lähtemään vaihtoon ja opinnoissa on ollut vaihdolle luonteva paikka. Kehittyvät maat ovat olleet painopistealueina alusta alkaen, vuodesta 2005 niiden rooli on näkynyt yhä selkeämmin Diakin kansainvälisissä strategioissa.

Diakin yhteistyökumppanien määrä Aasiassa on kasvanut jonkin verran alkuvuosista, mutta painopiste on haluttu keskittää kolmeen maahan: Intiaan, Nepaliin ja Vietnamiin. Jotkut kumppanuudet ovat vuosien saatossa päättyneet joko Diakin tai vastapuolen toivomuksesta, mutta nykyisiin kumppaneihin Diakilla on vahvat suhteet ja keskinäinen luottamus on luja.

Runsaat 400 opiskelijaa on valinnut vuosien saatossa Aasian kohdemaan-osakseen ja heidän antamansa palaute on auttanut Diakia sekä päättämään yhteistyön kehittämistä että myös selkeästi tukemaan partnereita entistä paremmin.

Ulkoministeriön rahoittaman North South South – ohjelman kautta Diak on voinut aloittaa kahdensuuntaisen opettaja- ja opiskelijavaihdon Nepalin ja Vietnamin kanssa. NSS – rahoitteinen HOPE – hanke on syventänyt yhteistyötä sekä Aasiaan että suomalaisten korkeakoulupartnereiden kanssa.

Kaikki Diakin vaihtoon lähtevät opiskelijat osallistuvat pakolliseen valmennukseen. Vuosien kuluessa kehitetty ohjelma vahvistaa opiskelijoiden kulttuurisia, persoonallisia, tiedollisia ja käytännön valmiuksia vaihtoon lähtiessä. Palaute kentiltä on ollut erittäin positiivista.

Opiskelijoiden vuosien mittaan antama palaute josta voidaan lukea myös tämän kirjan sivuilta, kertoo että muutama kuukausi vaihdossa maailmalla on jättänyt elinikäisen jäljen opiskelijoihin.

Asiasanat:

Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Intia, Nepal,
Vietnam, opiskelijavaihto,
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PREFACE

Writing this book was like diving into a sea full of colourful living creatures in all kinds of forms and shapes. The deeper I went the more exciting things could be found. At one point I had to finish, unfortunately, and a lot of what I saw and experienced could not be told in this book. But I'm sharing with you glimpses of Diak's history in Asia and of Diak's growth into a professional international actor that has not forgotten its basic values.

I'm thankful to Jouko Porkka, my previous boss, for introducing to me the idea of writing this book and to Riikka Hälikkä, head of international relations who was very supportive of the idea from the very first moment. They said after hearing about my retirement plans that all the silent knowledge I have about Diak's cooperation in Asia should be collected under the same covers. Collecting this material has been a journey to my own work history in Diak as well. Many good memories have come up and filled me with thankfulness for all those years that I've been able to do international work in Diak.

This book could never have been born without the cooperation with so many wonderful people; partners overseas, colleagues in Finland and most of all students in Finland and Asia who have shared their valuable experiences, learning's and wisdom in this booklet. Without all these people this book would be dull and one-sided. Now I feel it's full of colours, enthusiasm and life.

I have structured this book and used the material I received from various people through email in such a way that all the partners and teachers that have written to me are used as primary resource people. Their names appear also in the reference list. The students answering my questions have agreed that I use their first name and the year of their exchange and the country.

I'm sharing my own experiences over the years as well. I'm using travel reports, strategies and memos telling what have been going on over these past ten years and more in Diak's activities in Asia. I'm also writing about the development of Diak's international activities in general; such as student selection process, development of orientation and supervision, strategic changes. I'm not telling about Diak in Africa, Europe or anywhere else. They are topics for future writings.

I'm grateful for all the photos I've been able to borrow for the book.

Last but not least: Thanks to all my colleagues - who have read the material during different phases of writing - for valuable comments and encouraging feedback. It was much nicer to continue after knowing that there were others who are supportive of what I'm doing.



INTRODUCTION

This is a book about Diaconia University of Applied Sciences' (Diak's) fifteen years in Asia. It's also a story about people here and in Asia who have been dedicated to these partnerships over the years. It's also the story of my own Diak history: I have been working in Diak for almost 15 years without a break and all that time I have been responsible for international activities, for the past five years solely for Asia. I'm telling in a personal way – using my own travel reports, email discussions and my memory for sharing where I have been involved. But I have not been involved in all the beginnings. Many of my colleagues have done their share, especially in the early years of Diak. Whenever possible I have interviewed through email my colleagues and they have recalled the times when they were involved.

There is no partnership without partners. Diak has been lucky to find so many good and long lasting partners in Asia. Some of them have been working with us even before Diak existed as partners for Diak's predecessors, some have been with us from the beginning of Diak and many have joined later. This book gives a voice to all of them that I only could reach through email. They are telling how they see now the cooperation or have seen it over the years.

And most important for us as Diak: There are hundreds of students that have been in Asia for their exchange. Over the years I've read thousands of pages of students' experiences and learning processes in Asia. In this book I have not used those reports, but chosen ex-students whose email address I found easily and wrote to them asking what they think now about the time they spent in Asia. In between the text you can read about their experiences. Of course, those students that have responded are the ones who benefitted from the experience and it was easy for me to find them. It would be useful for someone to write a thesis about students' experiences, to get the whole picture.

From the beginning of Diak's history in the nineties' one of the golden principals was that all students should study multicultural professionalism and have a possibility to go abroad, also to developing countries during their studies. The emphasis on global south was natural because Diak's background institutions were church related and some were also missionary organizations who had natural contacts with Asia and Africa. A very significant role had those teachers who were teaching multicultural professionalism in the early years of Diak. It seems that most of the first contacts were born through personal contacts – or through contacts created by the institutions behind Diak.

As you will see over the pages of this book each of the main partners of Diak in Asia has a different kind of story behind it. Partnerships that have emerged over the years from these beginnings are valuable for Diak's studies and hopefully also for the partners overseas.

It took quite a while to be able to create connections that offer a possibility for mutual exchange. Diak had in Nepal and Vietnam good University partners and on both sides there was great willingness to expand the cooperation to a two way movement but funding was missing.

When Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs opened through Centre for International Mobility (Cimo) the North South South (NSS) funding for Asia and Nepal and Vietnam were the first optional countries for partnership, we all were most joyful. This book will also give good glimpses at the intensive courses and exchanges happening through NSS funding as well as share feedback of the teachers and students involved.

Whenever something is started from the beginning many steps of development must take place. That was the case in Diak's student exchange as well. Over the years the rules and principles of the exchange process have been developed; student selection process has been clarified, orientation has been made a part of studies required by all, supervision has been clarified and also the role of global cooperation has been made clear in Diak's strategy. All these areas will shortly be covered in following.



2 GLOBAL ISSUES IN DIAK'S STRATEGIES OVER THE YEARS

2.1 Starting point

You can read from the very early documents of the foundation of Diak that the values of Diak are based on Christianity, therefore, we emphasise the human dignity of each person. Diak is committed to social justice, solidarity and the empowerment of people. It aims to train people to influence social change, work for a multicultural society and fight social exclusion. These values have been guiding the decision making and pedagogy of Diak all through the years. (Diak's strategy 2009.)

Multicultural and multiprofessional studies were strengths of the emerging Polytechnic and have been mentioned in the Experimental plan for Diak of 1995. Diak wanted to educate professionals who have good tools in facing the multicultural society at their future work. From the very beginning it was made possible that students could go abroad as part of their studies. The goal set in 1995 was that 30% of students would go abroad and the number of students coming from universities abroad would be one quarter of the number of outgoing students. (Kokeilusuunnitelma 1995.)

The important role of Diak's background institutions can be seen in the international activities, especially in the early years of Diak. Institutions with Christian background have naturally formed contacts globally because it's part of the Christian way of thinking. Also many of the institutions behind Diak had already long term contacts with partners overseas. The Diaconic institutes behind Diak had sent their students abroad already for some years, most of them from the beginning of 1990's. Yet, at the time of Diak was admitted the status of a Polytechnic, the only partner in Asia was The Institute of Psychological Education and Research (Iper) in Kolkata, India. The majority of the partners were at that time in Europe. (Kokeilusuunnitelma 1995.)

2.2 Towards sending students abroad

The international activities of first Diak years consisted of strengthening existing partnerships, but also of creating new ones. I think that a very important role played the personal interests of people who had joined Diak as teachers. To mention a few: In Pieksämäki Raija Helistö had brought her enthusiasm about India to practise, in Järvenpää Kari Latvus, former missionary to Hong Kong, had created contacts with Hong Kong, in Alppikatu

there were inherited ties to Iper, India, and those ties were strengthened, especially by Raili Gothoni and Esa Konttinen. Not to mention that Diak had in between got involved in Vietvoc project (1997-2002) were Raija Opas, Kyösti Voima and Eila Niitamo played an important role. In Kirstinkatu I myself had come from Finnchurchaid and Asia played a special part in my life, so Nepal and Bangladesh were natural starting points for new partnerships. Also some new partners were found amongst Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) country offices, such as Uganda and Sambia in Africa. Shortly we worked also with Cambodia but the placement was not suitable for Diak students.

The role of developing countries was important in receiving outgoing Diak students as soon as the studies of Diak 1 had come to a point where the multicultural study unit was in curriculum (normally the fifth semester). From the very beginning the international team was working on good preparations for sending students abroad. The practices came into use slowly, at different times in different units.

That was also seen by the quality group that evaluated Diaks international activities in 1999-2000.

The Quality report of 2000 says that the wide range of partners is both a richness and a weakness. There are lots of good connections created by personal commitment, yet dependency on individuals and disability to estimate critically these relations can be a negative factor. The report says that Diak's units are on different levels in their engagements to international exchange. Some students get good motivation, orientation, and supervision, others much less. Also some units were involved in several partnerships; some had hardly any partners of their own. (Arola & Raulo 2000, 56-60.)

As far as I can see the international team took seriously the feedback of the quality report, especially the point of giving all students a possibility to get good orientation before going abroad. It's spelled out in Diak's international strategy of 2002 that all students are entitled to equal opportunities for international studies. There will also be no more earmarked placements for students of one individual unit, but all are opened for the entire Polytechnic. By this time the international team had also set principles for compulsory orientation and reflection after returning back home. All together both orientation and reflection should include 20 hours of face to face studies. This can be done jointly by several units or separately in different parts of Diak. (Diak's international strategy 2002.)

The Ministry of Education emphasizes in its strategy of 2001 other values of international relations than close cooperation with global south. The interest lies more on European common education policies (Bologna Process) and in increasing the number of foreign students in Finland. (Ministry of Education 2001.)



2.3 Professional development

During the professional development of Diak also the international activities have been more professionalized. As can be seen from the strategy of 2002 the international office had started to make plans where the recommendations of the quality report had been taken into consideration. It was not so difficult to organize the orientation and open all places to everyone, but as I recall the team was also setting over the years several times criteria for good and professional placements, but the evaluation of the quality of each placement was difficult. There we could see that the quality report had been very right about some things. If there were strong personal ties or ties of one Diak unit to some placement, it was not very easy to look at it critically. The team was also listening to students' feedback after their exchange but that was varying very much; some students had excellent experiences, others felt that they learned nothing. So, how to evaluate a placement on these criteria's? This discussion concerned not only Asia but all Diak's partners around the world. Many changes have taken place over the years and as far as I can see, personal passions are not overcoming professionalism in 2012!

Over the years also the multicultural dimension was seen in the centre of Diak's international activities which made Diak a unique Polytechnic (from some point University of Applied Sciences). The role of global south in Diak's partnerships has been there from the beginning, but outspoken more clearly only in the latest strategies. Earlier it has been almost like a hidden agenda to be read from Diak's value basis and relations. Yet the number of students going to developing countries has been increasing over the years. (Diak's international strategy 2005.)

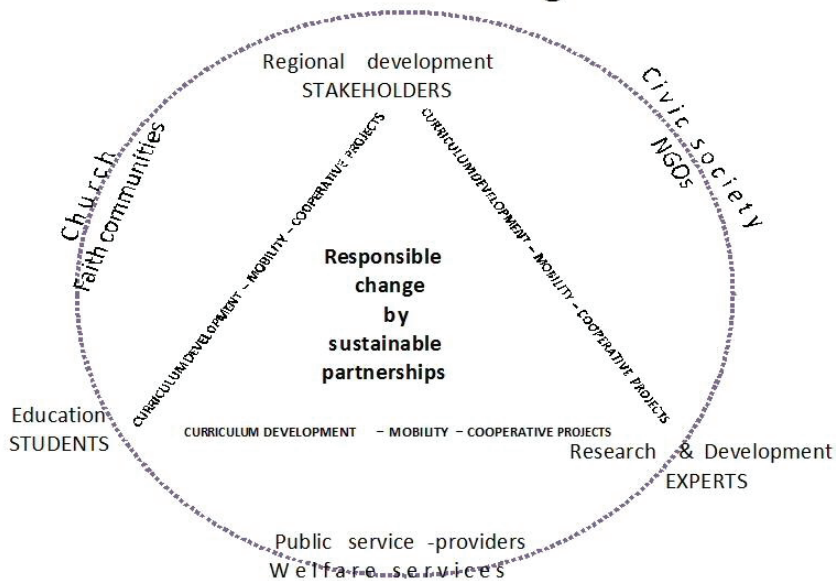
The international team had a vision that Diak will be amongst the best third of Polytechnics in international cooperation, both in Education as well as in research- and developmental activities. Diak will promote justice, tolerance and support for the people and communities who need the most. It was the principal – and still is – that all students have a chance to go abroad. Diak's project activities are of high quality. (Diak's international strategy 2005.)

Diak's former international relations manager of 2004-07 Tuovi Leppänen sees that *the emphasis on developing countries was on practical level at that time. Diak attracted students who wanted to go abroad during their studies. What I've understood after those years developing countries have become more into the centre of Diak's profile. It is good because in that way profiles of even big organizations develop from strong practical work and through motivated people to the more professional level.* (Tuovi Leppänen, personal communication 3.2 and 7.2. 2012.)

In the middle of the nineties Cimo launched the North South South project, in first years only with African partners. Yet that was a beginning of a new era also in Diak's international activities. It had been seen and discussed many times over the years that the good cooperation with global south demanded the possibility of a two way movement. Diak had developed partnerships with Universities and colleges as can be seen in chapter 3 and many times the partners, also in Asia had asked when could they come over to Finland. The first phases and the process so far of NSS Asia will be described in chapter 5. Hope project (Holistic Partnership in Social Work and Health Care Education) has been a very important step in professionalizing and making Diak's cooperation with Asia more education centred, without forgetting the ultimate goal and target group of the education: the most vulnerable people in each society. (Hope applications 2007; 2010.)

Diak strategy of 2009 finally says that global responsibility is seen as one of the main focuses of Diak's activities. Diak's international office as well as the research unit has been committed to global south. In Diak's research programs projects related to participation and poverty are in the focus both in Finland and in Developing Countries. (Diak's strategy 2009.)

Principles of International Diak : **Tools for Change**



Diak's main international partners are in Asia, Africa and Europe. The strategy says that it's important to understand that the cooperation with global south demands sensitivity towards other religions and cultures. Globalization increases the need to become more international also at home. Climate change affects most strongly the developing countries where able professionals are needed in catastrophe and development work. Diak's education prepares for international and multicultural tasks where the emphasis is on people's equal participation. (Diak's strategy of 2009.) The Head of International Relations Riikka Hälikkäs sees, however, *that whatever groups inside Diak have made the strategic plans, they've always come to the same conclusion: developing countries are important to us* (Riikka Hälikkäs, personal communication 1.2.2012).

Ministry of Education and Culture has in its international strategy of 2009 – 2015 given some space for cooperation with global south. It's written in the strategy that *with globalisation, the world is developing into an increasingly comprehensive system. Operating in globalising world forces the higher education institutions to take a critical look at the ethicality of their operating principles. The activities of the higher education institutions are based on responsibility, sustainable development and understanding and appreciating diversity within the higher education community. Global responsibility also means consolidating the knowledge base of developing countries.* (Ministry of Education and Culture 2009.) Yet, as Riikka Hälikkäs says: *Diak is one of the few Universities of Applied Sciences where global south is in the centre of the strategy* (Riikka Hälikkäs, personal communication 23.3.2012).



3 STORIES BEHIND PARTNERSHIPS WITH EACH COUNTRY

3.1 Bangladesh: when and what?

Diak's main partner in Bangladesh has been Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) established in 1971 as the Bangladesh field program of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). RDRS helped Bangladeshi refugees during the war of liberation. RDRS provided relief and rehabilitation services to the war ravaged area of north-west Bangladesh. In 1997 LWF transformed RDRS into an autonomous national Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). RDRS is a partner of Finnchurchaid (FCA). (Annual Report 2004.)

The initial contact between Diak and RDRS was taken in Nepal in 2000 as I visited Lutheran World Service (LWS) Nepal. Mr Neil Armstrong, director for Nepal LWS and representative for RDRS Bangladesh recommended the cooperation. RDRS was hosting a newly initiated Bengali Institute that was prepared for an international exchange program from partner countries. Mr Armstrong saw that Diak's program would fit into the plan very well. We agreed that I will contact RDRS office through Finnchurchaid. (Meretmaa 2000.)

RDRS agreed to receive Finnish students as soon as there were suitable candidates. First Diak students went to Bangladesh in September 2001. Two nursing students had their flight scheduled one week after September 11th. We all were a bit frightened to send students at that situation to a Muslim country, but there were no Foreign Ministry warnings about travelling to Bangladesh and RDRS staff assured that they will take good care of the students. I visited Bangladesh two months later for the first time. It was good to see how well the organization functioned and it was a very rewarding experience to see how things were working there for the students. It wasn't easy but they survived. (Meretmaa 2001.)

A year later Diak sent three social work students to Bangladesh. These students were sick quite a lot and they were missing the possibility to do concrete work with children. In 2002 RDRS director Kamaludd Akbar also visited FCA and Diak. In discussions with him we decided that from the next group on Diak would send only more mature students to Bangladesh, preferably students who have another developing country experience behind and are doing their final practicum where the main task is to do a developmental work instead of working directly with hands. The willingness in collecting data for thesis and interest in development questions would be positive factors in choosing students for Bangladesh.

RDRS staff visited Finland and FCA frequently and just about every time Diak has had a chance to host the guests for a day or two. In 2002 Kamaludd Akbar and Diak's Director for research Dr Sakari Kainulainen met and an idea of developing a model for student research came up. The discussion was continued in meetings with FCA staff and also during my second journey to Bangladesh in 2003. (Meretmaa 2003.) The idea of modelling Diak's thesis process abroad was further developed so that Ms Anne Määttä from the research unit went to Bangladesh for a few weeks in autumn 2004 with one Diak student planning to do his thesis there. The model developed by Anne Määttä is further introduced in chapter 4, where Diak's thesis process abroad is described.

The new criteria for students practicing in Bangladesh were used already in spring 2003 when four Diak students went to RDRS to do their placement. Three of them had experience of Nepal and one of Africa. They all concentrated on a chosen area of development work and the period turned out to be very successful for both the students and for RDRS.

I felt like coming back home. I had been in Nepal the previous year. It was best to be in the country with ordinary people, alone, with other students we met on weekends. This way I learned to understand the people and maybe they also a little bit of me, the only white one amongst them. (Helena of 2003.)

In Bangladesh I did my training in RDRS (Rangpur Dinajpur Rural service). In rural area many people were ultra-poor who had lost in floods almost everything. Still the most of them had very strong belief in life. I did poster project how ultra-poor people can empower themselves and have some micro loan to improve their lives. The best memory in Bangladesh was to be in rural area and work with different kinds of people. (Kristiina of 2003.)

Bangladesh has been chosen for placement by 20 students over the years. Students have been informed beforehand that the place is demanding but the experience can be most eye opening and only a few times over the years it's turned out that it's been too hard for students. Majority of the experiences have been very good.

The main purpose of my visit was to observe the aboriginals in their daily lives....I was surprised how proud and happy these people were...when we compare their lives to the way we are used to living, we also need to remember that it's not always right to teach them what we know; we must also let them keep their tradition and culture. (Liimatta 2004.)

The best I experienced during my placements were meeting the people; get to know my co-student and myself. I learnt so much about myself from the others during those days at abroad. To cope with a totally different culture is something that gives you an amazing opportunity to grow up as a person.



When I returned back to Finland, I returned always as better person because of all these wonderful persons I had met, I could say. (Katja of 2006.)

It was a phantastic experience as a whole! Hospitality, caring people, smiles, friendliness, all was great. It was interesting to study the employees' welfare in the working community. I think I'm more tolerant and open minded and it's easier to meet clients from Asia. (Kaija of 2006.)

Internship with RDRS Bangladesh was a wonderful learning experience. I got to know work of RDRS and I understand how important the work is. Through my development assignment I saw also different things and somehow got deeper in to organization internal things like it is goal in this study unit. (Ulla of 2008.)

Time in Bangladesh taught me a lot also from different perspectives. I learnt new culture, I learnt from the kind Bangladeshi people about life. I learnt a lot about development work and people can help themselves through self-help. I learnt how important a good government is. Work of the RDRS is very important and also well organized. I was also happy when workers told me how they enjoy working in RDRS. It was easy to notice that RDRS is a good working place. (Ulla of 2008.)

My best experiences in Bangladesh were to realize what effects a long-lasting work makes in the lives of the beneficiaries of such sustainable projects. My best moments in Bangladesh were those were I could hear and see wonderful and successful life-changing stories of local people. Especially of those that are most marginalized, women, children and the poorest of the poor. (Veli-Matti of 2009.)

I can only tell this with pride: DIAK gave me a unique opportunity at that time to focus my studies to something that really was my personal interest. On my present life as a missionary worker and development aid worker I am dealing with many of the same phenomenon that I experienced in Diak placement of those days. I am privileged also to have this previous experience to work alongside with people of other religions and other cultures. Today it is my everyday reality. (Veli-Matti of 2009.)

It was an amazing experience, academically and professionally. I managed to learn a lot and reflect upon what I had already and theoretically learned. Support from Diak during this period was just great! (Manoj of 2009.)





PICTURE 2: Veli-Matti Vähäkivijärvi and Nita Nahkala in a nursing school in Kurigram, Bangladesh 2009. Photo owned by V-M Vähäkivijärvi.

Since 2010 no one has been interested in going to Bangladesh. One reason might be that we have emphasized that Bangladesh is a demanding place and preferably it should be the placement for the second exchange. The new curriculum of Diak is not making the second placement very easy to apply for. Maybe also interest in development questions has reduced. The experience of the last two students was quite hard even if they had experience in being in developing countries before. We are not closing the connection. RDRS in Bangladesh has been extremely kind and helpful partner organization and all credit for that. It's good to keep open contacts like this. One day some suitable students turn up again. Yet, as with many other countries it has become obvious that there are special requirements and we just have to find good matches.

3.2 Hong Kong: Strong beginning – many quiet years and a new start

Cooperation with Hong Kong had started already in 1990's with Seurakuntaopisto (Parish College in Järvenpää) where former Diak's interna-

tional coordinator Dr. Kari Latvus was teaching. He had also been a missionary to Hong Kong in years 1992-94 which gave a firm basis for cooperation. Hong Kong program was very well structured and the contract was made between Diak- Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) and Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM). The first contract was made from 1997 to 2002 and Kari Latvus says that out of the 23 Finnish students that went to Hong Kong over those years the first ones were from Järvenpää Parish College but students since 1998 from Diak. (Latvus & Malkavaara 2002.)

As going through the reports and contracts from the early years of Hong Kong project it could be seen that the planning was very well done and many principles that became Diak's common practise only later were already taken into consideration in the exchange. What I mean is that students were offered at least theoretically orientation in the environment, cultural and religious issues, finances, study and placement programs, language requirements. In the early years of Diak's exchange the selection process was very individual depending on who was in charge in which Diak's unit. (Latvus 2002.)

Basically the division of labor with the partners in Asia was such that FELM gave the orientation in form of pre missionary course and supervision in Hong Kong end. Students took two days a week theological studies at the seminary and three days a week they went to placements, some of which were found through FELM and others through direct contacts. (Latvus 1998, 2002.)

The first group of students going to Hong Kong did only part of the preliminary training course normally required by FELM but later on it was decided by FELM that all students should go through the same process. During these years 16 Diak students did studies and placements in Hong Kong. (Leena Haavisto, personal communication 9.2. 2012.) Personally I did not have a chance to know these students from the early and have not seen their feedback. But I did know three students that went to Hong Kong after 2003 and their feedback was very positive.

Since 2005 FELM could, however, not receive Diak students in Hong Kong which meant that also interest in the program that had started strongly in Järvenpää had vanished. The importance of students coming back from their exchange as promoters has been the most important means of activating new applicants for certain places.

When looking at this history of cooperation with Hong Kong I regret that a program that had started as well structured did end quite soon. We can think about the reasons as well as with all other programs. One obvious reason is that Hong Kong was very strongly connected with Kari Latvus. After he stopped working as international coordinator and the emphasis in Järvenpää was more on European partners no one was there talking for Hong Kong. Also it could be said that going to Hong Kong was not made very easy for Diak

students. Not everyone could fill the requirements of FELM nor wanted to fill them. Diak started to offer many attractive placements in Asia that were far more accessible. Thirdly, the number of church oriented students at Diak has reduced and interest in theological studies has declined.

You can imagine how welcome a new approach to Diak from Hong Kong a couple of years ago were! Ms. Cynthia Ca Abdon-Tellez from Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW) in Hong Kong contacted Diak through a former FELM missionary and wanted to visit us 2010. Riikka Hälikkä and I myself met her in June 2010 and the discussion was most fruitful. Cynthia told us that Diak students had been with Migrant Mission through FELM before but for years they had not received anyone. She said that she would like to make a contract directly with Diak and open the place for 2-4 mature female students who have previous experience of group work and empowering and counselling vulnerable women. MFMW helps abused and maltreated migrant domestic workers to defend their rights. (Meeting 2010.) It seemed almost like a circle had closed again. We returned back to one of the same organizations introduced by Kari Latvus hoping that a vivid exchange could start again.

However, it seems to take time to find the right students, when a new partnership opens up. This time two qualified girls in their last phase of studies were found to go in the autumn 2011. They were also interested in making their thesis in the organization. Challenging in getting students to Hong Kong directly, without any FELM connection were the authorities of Hong Kong. Receiving an appropriate visa was quite difficult in both ends but after the process has been done once it will be easier.

The students faced some problems in finding a common understanding with the organization which is also understandable during the first time. Yet the feedback was most encouraging for the future cooperation.

After small hardships all went well. English was adequate language because all spoke English. I learned a lot about immigrants and about Hong Kong law towards migrant workers. Our course on therapeutic art was successful and we shared many kinds of feelings during the course. We laughed and cried together. (Viena 2011.)



PICTURE 3: Viena Koponen and Satu Kippo were leading an art course for domestic helpers in order to help the girls express their feelings. Hong Kong 2011. Photo owned by Satu Kippo.



PICTURE 4: Pasi Parila and two girls at Iper 2011. Photo owned by Pasi Parila.

3.3 India: History behind – continuity with Diak

3.3.1 Well rooted Iper

India has been hosting three major Diak partnerships but only one of them is still functioning. A few students have also done their placement in India through other organizations. Several theses have been written in India for the use of respective organizations as well as to promote exchange in India.

The oldest and still functioning exchange program is that with Institute of Psychological and Educational Research (Iper) that serves disadvantaged children like street children, child workers,

mentally retarded children, orphans and abused children in Kolkata, India. The programs are based on research and their focus is on education, nutrition, vocational training and recreation. Another important area of service that IPER is associated with is prevention of drug addiction, and the organisation has set up a counselling centre and a rehabilitation unit to help drug addicts to return to normal life. (Institute of Psychological & Educational Research 2001, 2-4.)

Diak's cooperation with Iper was inherited from Helsinki Diaconia Institute. In the early 1990's the institute was looking for partners in developing countries, among others from India where the personnel chief of Diaconia Institute Ms Birgitta Rantakari had lived for a couple of years in the 1980's. After first experiments with Lutheran World Service and Mother Theresa's hospital, it was decided that a NGO contact was needed. (Raili Gothoni, personal communication 6.2.2012.) Teacher of Diaconia Institute Ms Irmeli Leinos was sent to Calcutta to discover an appropriate partner. Director of LWS Mr Chris Minderhoud was the first one to recommend Iper that was a well-organized educational organization and well prepared for receiving students, had a connection with a University. First Finnish students went to Calcutta in 1993. (Raili Gothoni 2012; Irmeli Leinos, personal communication 6. and 7. 2 2012; Bijli Mallik, personal communication 30.1. 2012.)

The cooperation started with mentally disabled children and further continued with street children and health care for mothers. In the first years of cooperation there was Finnish government funding available. From the beginning Ms Mallik had an important role in supervising the students and organizing accommodation. (Raili Gothoni 2012.) Ms Mallik recalls her experiences:

I was to work as the supervisor for the students. At the very beginning the students were staying with the family of Mr Kochhar. I was to orient them about the work of IPER and take them around showing them the different projects of IPER and plan their working schedule in consultation with their



skills and interest. Since late 1990s the students are staying in the dormitory facilities of IPER. During the stay of the students beside regular meetings with me a weekly one hour meeting is kept in the weekly work-plan of the students. (Bijli Mallik 2012.)

Since the beginning of Diak 1996 cooperation with Iper was transferred to Diak together with the teachers responsible for the exchange program. Ms. Raili Gothoni, international coordinator in the first years of Diak recalls that there were some major challenges with students going to India, such as the language, although Diak arranged a Bengali language teacher for the students. Secondly students suffered from a cultural shock, even if there had been orientating program for those leaving for India. (Raili Gothoni 2012.) Similar experiences are reported by Ms. Mallik as well:

The first batch of students had no idea about the social conditions and other facilities that were available in Kolkata. Moreover they were assailed with a number of experiences that they never expected or experienced before. The language and cultural differences were the major challenges that they had to cope with. (Bijli Mallik 2012.)

Diak started its orientation program from the very beginning of exchange programs and the more professional it became the better results could be seen in India as well as elsewhere. It's good to know, however, that Diak has been aware from the beginning that students do need orientation for going abroad. There is more about the development of the orientation process in chapter...It can be seen also in Ms Mallik's comment:

The students over the years know more about the situation of Kolkata and the social and cultural differences that exist through the presentations of the students who visited IPER. Also to make their association and work more fruitful I introduced a plan of working on a Micro-project with the target group of children and women of different projects of IPER. (Bijli Mallik 2012.)

When looking through reports of the micro projects that students have carried out one can see that a lot of collective knowledge has been gathered on Iper's shelves through the student work. Yet I think that most important it has been to the students. They have been able to sort out their impressions and ideas and they've needed to collect some theoretical background for their report as well. Many times the reports have been connected with concrete projects the students have realized with the children and that way, of course, the most important beneficiaries have been the children of Iper.

One of the very first Diak groups (autumn 2000) decided that they should start a sponsorship program for Iper. The program is still going on and it has expanded to other partners of Iper as well. Each child gets a support of 145 Euros for a year which makes education and meals at Iper possible. The same two students who started the sponsorship program in 2000 and graduated

many years ago are still responsible for running the campaign. That is a sign of an extreme commitment and shows how important a few months' placement can be to a student.

It seems that India has been a challenging place for students who are keen on doing some voluntary work over there also afterwards. I don't have exact information of how many students are afterwards involved in their own small NGO in India after the placements but it seems that at least a few. One of them is Anni who went to Kolkata already autumn 2001 and is still involved:

I was waiting for the international internship period since the beginning of the studies at Diak as international work and issues of developing countries were close to my heart already then. In the very beginning I was planning to go to South America but as school did not have placements there at the time i decided to go to the other direction, Asia and chose India and the city of Kolkata my destination as I had seen many documentaries about the places there and had wished to go somewhere more exotic. So I packed my bags and headed to Kolkata in autumn 2001 to work with IPER and slum kids. (Anni of 2001.)

I truly enjoyed my experience in Kolkata as all the time there I felt I was doing something that had a deeper meaning. I could see the effect I had in the children I was working with at the school and as much as I could give from myself to them, they gave it back to me in same amount by their big smiles and thank you' s. It left a mark to me that will never go away! Not only did i enjoy the work but the culture i learned on the side. (Anni of 2001.)

The experience really had an impact on my life. I travelled to Kolkata several times after the internship and volunteered there and in other parts of India and also Nepal. Nowadays I am a volunteer country coordinator for an NGO that is placed in Kolkata and try to visit there as often as possible. I could not see my life without this experience and the possibility to go back over and over again. India and Nepal seem to have the skill to catch part of your heart. (Anni of 2001.)

I believe that the time I spent in India made me grow up more holistically than any other placement so far. India itself was so different for a student who is used to western standard of living and thinking. It was challenging both physically and mentally. Working and getting used to living there was very interesting. Our work at Iper was very independent and demanded initiative. Most challenging was the lack of common language since kids were not able to communicate in English. Most of the material we used with kids we bought ourselves because of the tight budget Iper had. (Pasi of 2011.)

My only visit to Iper took place in 2003, although I was responsible for student exchange in India for almost ten years. That time I remember us still talking about the possibility that Diak could find a Finnish partner with whom to apply for government funding for Iper's Child Abuse program.



(Meretmaa 2003.) Raili Gothoni commented earlier on changes in the strategy of Deaconess Institute from Asia towards Africa and that way a long term partnership through them was not possible anymore (Raili Gothoni 2012).

What I did find during my visit to Iper was that the work was very well organized and structured and even if the circumstances in Kolkata were demanding the living and working conditions at Iper were most favourable for the students. Ms Mallik also told that Iper's Sponsorship program was going very well and she was very happy about the commitment of sponsors. It was also good to see that the Micro projects were already that time very impressive and gave a good perspective on the projects students carried through during their placements. (Meretmaa 2003.)

Besides the student exchange there was in 2006-7 an attempt to find funding for an Asia wide program where also India could have been involved. However, at that time North South South (NSS) program accepted only Nepal and Vietnam as Asian partner countries and that way the University partnership with Asia got its direction.

Esa Konttinen was responsible for the Iper cooperation after Raili Gothoni in the early years of Diak. He visited India latest in 2000 but has been supervising students' placements there over the years and reading reports. He says: *I've been very happy that Iper offers a professionally challenging learning environment in the middle of the slums of Kolkata. Diak students have been able to see that social work is possible even in utmost circumstances.* (Personal communication 12.4.2012.)

Esa recalls that many students described their experience being very impressive. After returning back home, you have changed. It has been a surprise to many how the people in the slums have been open towards strangers. Children's happiness in the middle of misery had been very touching. (Esa Konttinen 2012.)

I'm happy that our students have been able to empathize in children's lives and bring joy to them as Ms Mallik also says. I wish that Iper could be taken more into the cooperation that had been built with other countries in Asia. Iper is responsible for social work education that has same kind of elements as Diak's DSS education. (Esa Konttinen 2012.)

3.3.2 Pieksämäki goes to Varanasi

Behind the Varanasi project of Diak Pieksämäki (Diak East) there were personal experiences – as in many other beginnings of Diak's partnerships. Ms. Raija Helistö, former lecturer of the Institute of Inner Mission had visited India during her holiday and according to her she missed India so much that

the program was started in cooperation with Swedish partner University of Karlstad. The first group visited Varanasi 1996. (Raija Helistö, personal communication 5.2.2012.)

According to the action plans of 2001 and 2002 in Pieksämäki (Diak East) the India project will be continued and developed so that annually 20 students can go to India. The project includes both theoretical studies in Finland and India and some practise in India. Finnish Study Centre in Varanasi India will be further developed. Students will stay in India for two three months and teachers from two weeks to two months. The project was planned to continue until autumn 2003. (Action plans 2001 & 2002.)

The Indian partner was University of Varanasi and networking partners were University of Karlstad in Sweden hosting its own study centre in Varanasi and Institute of Inner Mission. The goal of the project was to increase the mutual understanding of Indian ja European cultures and cooperation in developing social and health care practices. (Action Plan 2001 & 2002; Mattila T. 2001.)

Over the years around 50 students visited India. They were meaningful experiences for the students but also for the community around Pieksämäki. It increased the public awareness of Diak in the area since students organized presentations and wrote to local newspapers. (Mattila T. 2001.)

The structure of this program has been different from all other Diak's programs abroad. This India project included travelling from place to place, lectures and discussions, and visits to organizations. In most other projects students have stayed in one place and worked there for a longer time. Yet, the number of students participating in this program in just 5-6 years has been remarkable.

For some reason the program was ended after 2002 and Pieksämäki students stated going to Iper or Nepal if they wanted to go to Asia.

3.3.3 Quick stop at Chennai - Gurukulum

Diak had a short partnership with Gurukulum institute in Chennai Southern India in the end of 1990's and at the beginning of this century. A big group of Diak personnel visited Chennai 1997 and participated according to Mikko Malkavaara in an excellent seminar about Dalit issues and the society. After that only a few Diak students did their placement in Gurukul but the outcome was not very good for either side. Students were not well enough oriented to go to Southern India and Gurkul was not ready to receive them. (Mikko Malkavaara, personal communication 1.3.2012.) Malkavaara says that: *If Dalit's and the cast discrimination will be a worldwide human rights issue, as I hope and believe, that visit to Gurukul is important in bringing Dalit is-*



sue to Finland. I wrote the book about Indian dalit theology and had made orienting material for the group about Dalit's. We had a chance to visit some Dalit villages and spend the nights in rather challenging circumstances. (Mikko Malkavaara 2012.)

Personally I had visited Gurukul during my previous work in Finnchurchaid in 1995 but that time I did not look at things from the student exchange point of view, so I can really not tell why the cooperation did not work out. That just happens and especially in earlier years it happened quite a lot.

3.4 Nepal: Secret behind – most popular as Diak's exchange country in Asia

3.4.1 Personal contacts as starting point

It's been said already before that most of Diak's partnerships have started from personal connections. It happened that way with Nepal as well. Yet there has been great development within years towards more professional and less personalized direction. But let's start from the beginning.

Personally I had joined Diak's staff in 1998 – first as a teacher on an hourly basis and only after a year as a full time employee. From the very beginning I was involved in international coordination, mainly due to my background. I had been working in Finnchurchaid for 10 years which gave me some relevance in cooperation with developing countries. I also had good contacts that were beneficial at the beginning while creating partnerships in global south.

My initial unit in Diak was Järvenpää, but after a year I was invited to Kirstinkatu which later on was merged with Alppikatu and those two together formed Diak Helsinki in 2002. Kirstinkatu was a small unit with about 25 students' intake, most of whom were getting a double degree of church qualification combined with bachelor of social services. From the beginning the students there were actively going abroad as were students from other small Diak's unit, such as Kauniainen.

I remember very clearly sitting in a meeting at Alppikatu in 1999 or early 2000 where teachers involved in international activities were gathered. Kyösti Voima was telling in that meeting that he had visited Nepal 1999 on his way back from Vietnam where he was teaching as a Vietvoc exchange teacher. He had visited among other places St. Xavier's Social College. I had visited Nepal a few years back (1996) as a group leader with some contact persons of Finnchurchaid, mostly church employees. The trip had been very well organised by Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Nepal. I had fallen in love with that

country as seemed to have done most of the group members. It was decided in that meeting at Alppikatu that we should continue exploring possibilities with Nepal and it should be my task since Kyösti was concentrating on Africa.

3.4.2 First placements: LWF and Children Welfare Centre

Following summer – 2000 - I visited Nepal. My program was mainly organised by Lutheran World Federation (LWF). I had a chance to visit the Bhutanese refugee centre in south-eastern corner of Nepal and we made a contract with LWF to send a Diak student to the camp already following autumn 2000. I visited also one children's home called Children Welfare Centre (CWC) that was funded by Finnish people who had been working in Nepal for some time. We discussed about sending students there for placement. And it became our partner for a few years. (Meretmaa 2000.)

Two first Diak students went to Nepal for a three month exchange in autumn 2000. One of them went to work in the Bhutanese camp and the other one in CWC. The experiences were good. Already following semester (February 2001) there were four students going to Nepal. We had a good plan that two would go to the Bhutanese camp and two to CWC. As soon as the students got to Nepal, they were informed that there was no access to the camp anymore. UNHCR had started counting the refugees and outsiders had no place in there. I felt truly helpless. What to do with two students who were out of place in Nepal? I had visited House of Hope in 2000 but we had not yet made a contract with them. These two students had to find their way pretty much on their own, even if I talked with them on the phone at least once a week.

That was also the spring of the royal massacre in Nepal and one of our students continued to stay there on her own even during that time. Luckily she was safe. I still remember though that her spirits were not very high after she returned.

During my visit of 2000 I had arranged to meet Finnish missionaries Riitta-Leena and Markku Voutilainen who became quite important resource people in our future cooperation. With Markku's help we got the first guest house for students in a very convenient place and stayed with that place for about five years to come. (Meretmaa 2000.)

3.4.3 First contact with St. Xavier's Social College

In 2000 I visited also St. Xavier's where I met the principal Father Law who was an American Jesuit and around 75 years of age. I also met Mr Joyson



Jose who was the leader of the social work department. He reminded me that Kyösti Voima had visited him the previous year and he was interested in cooperation. Kyösti had also contacted St. Xavier's after his own visit and paved the way for my visit in summer 2000. Very soon after my visit Father Law passed away and the era of a new principal Pt. Augustine started. (Meretmaa 2000; Voima 2000.)

Father Antonysamy (present principal) recalls also that St. Xavier's got involved from 1999 onwards with DIAK after Kyösti Voima had visited Father Law 1999. Already that time it was discussed about Diak students coming to St. Xavier's and do some field work. (Antonysamy Antony, personal communication 8.2.2012.) During several years Diak students went to St. Xavier's for two – three weeks of their stay in Nepal to listen to lectures and connect with local students. I'm recalling the feedback and it seems that the experiences were very different; some found it most interesting to learn about Nepali way of teaching, about women's role, child rights, many issues. Yet, I remember some students complaining that they had already studied these things in Finland and Nepali students spoke Nepali most of the time, so visiting St. Xavier's was not useful.

During my visit to Nepal in 2004 Principal Pt. Augustine and Social Department Director Mr Joyson Jose were eagerly planning a program with Diak where two way exchanges could take place and even some funding could be found from some other partner of St. Xavier's. Yet nothing ever came out of these plans. (Meretmaa 2004.) Now when I look back at those times, I could think that we were preparing for something that didn't exist at that time yet. Good and active cooperation with St. Xavier's continued through the North South South activities.

3.4.4 Call for Esther: you are needed

Diak story with first steps in Nepal continues. In spring 2001 as we had hardly got started with Nepal Diak had 13 students applying for autumn 2001 and I felt that I can't manage the process on my own from Finland. Diak simply did not have enough knowledge of placements and accommodation. How to organize everything? My instinct said that Nepal is a place for Diak students! The only one I knew I could turn to was Markku Voutilainen from Felm and I think he realized what was coming up. He found us Esther Thapa and suggested that we would make a contract with her as the coordinator for the program. Esther was a former scholarship student of Felm who had been together with her husband Tirtha Thapa in Hong Kong Theological Seminary. Esther was an educated woman with wide range of connections.

Esther “knew everybody” which was helpful from the beginning. A nice coincidence was that Thapa’s had been in Hong Kong as neighbours with Dr. Kari Latvus who initiated Diak’s Hong Kong program. (Anne Meretmaa & Markku Voutilainen 2001.)

I came to know about DIAK around 2000 from Mr. Markku Voutilainen, who had been working with the students till then. He and his wife, Riita have been living in Nepal for many many years and they are close friends of my family. He is the one that connected me to DIAK.(Thapa 2012.).

Diak made a contract with Esther in 2001 and she started organising accommodation and placements for all the students coming to Nepal. The contract as such was made with Human Development and Community Service (HDCS) organization where Tirtha Thapa was the director. It was decided that all the contracts of individual placements were sub-contacted with HDCS. It made it possible for Esther to look up for new placements and also close down some if the cooperation did not function. At that time it was also easier to handle the payments to Nepal that way.

The number of students was big from year to year with some exceptions. We learned that we have to explore some placements in order to see if they fulfil the academic requirements set by Diak. Besides, we worked at the beginning with some small orphanages and they moved a lot around, too far from students’ accommodation. Or the places were closed down due to various reasons. We could not expect the students travel a long way to placement since in the early years of 2000 the political situation in Nepal was unstable and there were sudden strikes and Pandas that close the town. Only twice we, however, had to postpone the departure of students due to political instability. Both times they could go very soon and all went well after all.

Meeting Esther for the first time

My first acquaintance with Esther Thapa happened in the autumn 2001. I had already been in email contact with her frequently. I was supposed to go to Nepal only for one week. In order to meet Esther, visit all the placements we had and reflect with all 13 students the program had to be tight. The number of students had in between grown to 14 since one boy had left Bangladesh and continued his placement in Nepal. It was autumn 2001 and Bangladesh as a Muslim majority country was quite a challenging place for westerners. He had been there with a missionary organisation and faced the hostility at least in the streets of Dhaka. Two other Diak students were in north Bangladesh and they came for the last month of their placement to Nepal, but that was planned ahead. I headed from Nepal to Bangladesh for my first visit. (Meretmaa 2001.)



There were so many different orphanages and schools involved in the program at the beginning that it's impossible to remember them all. Some were our partners only for one semester, some others for several years. Some of the first students practising in orphanages were Minna and Kaarina in 2001.

I got new friends who still are my friends. Best experience was working in local children home. I saw how happy they were and they didn't have much. (Minna of 2001.)

It's more than ten years from my placement. I still think that it was one of the best times in my life. It was best to learn to know very different kinds of people, see how poor people are and yet, how happy and caring for one another. I've been wondering many times how the boys in the orphanage were so polite, caring and respectful although their childhood was in the streets. (Kaarina of 2001.)

Even if I had a terrible culture shock at the beginning and I could not accept injustice, lack of equality, poverty, I felt like being at home, I was safe. We visited Dalit women, sat in the middle of them, hugged each other, were close in spite of language barrier. Ever since I've supported FCA. I saw how missionary people, church people lived and worked with ordinary people, studied the language, integrated with local people... (Helena of 2002 and 2003.)

The best memories in Nepal was my training in children's home and studies in St Xavier's college. I met warm and nice people who did great work from their heart. (Kristiina of 2002 and 2003.)

The best was combining international relations, thesis and child protection. I learned so much in two months that it's hard to describe by words. (Kati of 2004.)

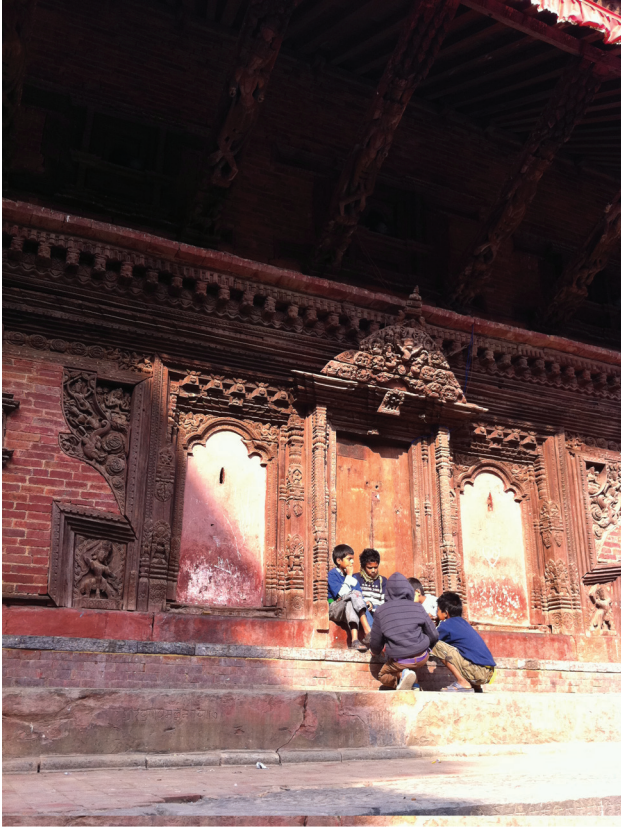
I got to return to something I was distanced from for a long time, that Asian culture which translated into my roots and partly my identity. I am from Kurdistan of Iraq but left when I was 3 and had lived in Pakistan for 6 years before moving to Finland. It's been 24 years now I haven't been to Kurdistan. This is why, Nepal was a great touch back to something familiar. I loved the culture, got introduced to Hinduism and how people led their lives. It wasn't hard to adapt. Nepal was just beautiful in every way. I also got to see the bad sides: poverty, street children, instability etc. One of the best experiences was to be part of Nepali team and win gold in kickboxing tournament, and bringing the team as an example to motivate children of my placement. Placements, I met great individuals, workers and children. I still maintain some contact with the workers. The most fulfilling experience was to be in service and interaction with the children; teaching them martial art, English and speaking Hindi language with them. (Lawin of 2009.)

Over the years a great number of Diak students went to Nepal. The procedure continued the same but some changes happened in living conditions

as well as in placements. Esther took care of all these. Reading from the student feedback sometimes things went very smoothly, sometimes there were some conflicts of interests. I think that's quite natural since it has been a learning process in both ways. I think that over the years also Diak's role has changed. We have become more aware of the hardships of exchange and more demanding professionally. Also many students have completed their thesis in Nepal and some really good research has been done. Some examples and comments will be found in the chapter 4 where theses abroad are discussed.

Esther Thapa is recalling her memories of the early years with Diak students: *My first assignments as a caretaker were not too different to what they are now. As the students are young and in a foreign country, my primary role is to acquaint them to Nepal and to make sure they were doing well and are safe. If they are sick I take them to the hospital, invite them for dinners to my home so they can tell me about their experiences. Of course I also facilitate their placements and things related to that. Part of my job as a coordinator was also to make sure their visas were up to date and that they were working to earn the college credits they need.* (Esther Thapa, personal communication 29.1.2012.)

As she says the first years were challenging because both parties were new to each other: *As I did not know much about Finnish culture or western culture in the beginning it was a little bit of a challenge. I did not want to annoy them but I also did not want to appear too distant, so finding the balance was tricky. One time in the beginning a student went rafting without letting me know. She had a small accident and she was obviously very scared. As it was my first time in such a situation with a Finnish student, so I did not feel so confident about my role – to act like a mother as I wanted to or not. But, with each batch of students that came I became more and more familiar with them – as Finns and as a younger generation. While in Nepal it would have been very rude to take a trip without letting a coordinator know, I now know it is not a matter of disrespect but just how independent young Finns are!* (Esther Thapa 2012.)



PICTURE 5:
Ancient Temple wall
and street children
in Kathamndu,
Nepal 2011. Photo:
Hanna Jääskeläinen



PICTURE 6: Esther Thapa at Sabitri Children's home in 2003. Photo: Anne Meretmaa

3.4 5 Lalitpur Nursing Campus

We were connected with St. Xavier's Social College loosely since 1999, but on the nursing side we started in 2002. That was when the first nursing student applied for Nepal. Our first partner was Lalitpur Nursing Campus (LNC) and it's been our partner ever since. For one year we were connected with another Campus due to the heavy payments that Patan hospital was expecting from us but luckily could make arrangements so that we could continue with LNC. To be able to do placement in a hospital in Nepal students need to be enrolled in one of the Nursing Campuses. In practise they spend normally one day a week at the Campus and four days at the hospital. (Meretmaa 2004.) Mrs Rebecca Sinha, former Campus Chief recalls the start of the cooperation in following way:

Ms Anne Meretmaa came to visit Lalitpur nursing campus. We had a friendly talk about exchange programme; that how we can work together - oh yes - north and south . However, I was really thrilled to go about the North South South programme that was my journey to walk with Diak. (Rebecca Sinha, personal communication 8.2.2012.)

Cooperation with LNC has continued ever since and activated by years. Quite a few nursing students have gone to placements through LNC, a few theses have been written about health issues in Nepal and since 2007 LNC has been an active participant in NSS activities. As Mrs Sinha visited Finland in 2009 she gave an interview to a newspaper at Pieksämäki comparing Finnish and Nepali nursing saying:

Resources for health care in Finland are excellent. If something should be needed it would the sense of community in nursing. In Finnish hospitals old people are left alone. In Nepal nursing is not at the same level but families take care of their members and participate in nursing care. (Sinha 2009.)

Mrs Sinha saw one common factor in our nursing: The lack of doctors is something that we share. That time Mrs Sinha had already received quite a few Diak students to her Campus and hospital, so she knew quite a lot about nursing in Finland.

3.4.6 Early Childhood Education Centre (ECEC)

ECEC that's offering training for preschool teachers is one of the newest but most important partners of Diak in Nepal. The first official involvement took place in February 2009 as I was in Nepal and after meeting Riitta-Leena Voutilainen at a lecture agreed that I should come and visit the place and see what options it would offer to Diak's students who are getting qualifi-



cation as kindergarten teachers. Riitta-Leena, a long term FELM missionary to Nepal had been working at ECEC for some years in charge of the product department and she promised to introduce me to the training department. ECEC had offered at the beginning one week courses for kindergarten teachers but was now involved in giving trainings that lasted for the whole year. Riitta-Leena and Esther continued talking about the details. (Meretmaa 2009; Reanne Binnenmars, personal communication 4.3.2012.)

First five Diak students started at ECEC in September 2009. Reanne Binnenmars recalls that the biggest challenge with the students was that they did not have teaching background which is the main focus of ECEC.

Language (Nepali and English) was a bit of a problem sometimes. Before we had had somebody from Finland (Riitta Leena) at our office who could help them expressing their thoughts and feelings. The challenge for us was to be good mentors and over the years we improved in this role. (now we are prepared in advance) It was helpful that Ann came to our office to see our organization. (Reanne Binnenmars 2012.)

Reanne says that most rewarding experiences have been the students themselves.

Lovely contacts and a contribution to our team. Two Diak Students who taught at a government school loved the children and the children loved them back. The kids came to school early to spend time with these Diak girls. The teachers of that school saw how that relationship made the children happy and cooperative. They too started to build relationships with the children. That was a very positive input they brought into that school. (Reanne Binnenmars 2012.)

But Reanne says that there have also been difficult times with some students' personalities and the fact that they seem to be there for other reasons but the practice. She says that it is important to have clear objectives for the practical training. (Reanne Binnenmars 2012.)

3.4.7 Street Children: Bal Bhojan and Sanga Sangai

Diak students were asking for years about a placement amongst the street children in Nepal. We made some queries around but nothing came up. Then in 2006 Rajesh Shahi who has been Diak's partner since 2008 had met someone from Finland and invited him to Bal Bhojan where he worked at that time. The word went around and one Diak student doing her placement in Nepal 2007 learned to know Rajesh and introduced him to Esther. (Rajesh Shahi, personal communication 6.3. 2012.)

The first two Diak students started practising at Bal Bhojan in spring 2008 followed by four at autumn 2008.

Rajesh recalls the biggest challenges: *In the beginning due to being my first experience, it took a little bit time to find the ways to asset them as well as to know them. Even for our children as being their difficult background with also having first experience and due to lack of opportunity, it took long time for them to learn as well as built up the confidence to interact, play and learn from them.* (Rajesh Shahi 2012.)

He says, however, that since the time of our cooperation with Diak a number of children were benefited due to the presence of volunteers and had got the knowledge of speaking English, learn some games with some of their language etc. Rajesh says that it was so rewarding to learn to know Finnish students and maintain friendship with them. (Rajesh Shahi 2012.)

The most difficult things is that sometime I found the students were found having lack of confidence while teaching as well as in interacting with the children and staffs. I would like to change and see that the volunteers would have been better if they come to teach with having the knowledge in some of the specific thing what they teach. (Rajesh Shahi 2012.)

Since 2010 Rajesh has been leading his own school for street children called Sanga Sangai where Diak students have moved with him from Bal Bhojan. It is most rewarding things for me and my charity for establishing the cooperation with DIAK. *If we don't have such cooperation, we wouldn't get an opportunity to know the Finnish students, as well as Finland and for our children they won't receive an opportunity to learn from the foreigners. Another important thing is that financial support coming from the students' placement program has also supporting us for mobilizing some of our programs in an efficient ways.* (Rajesh Shahi 2012.)

I have always wanted to work with children and youngsters so in that sense it did not impact my life. However, I do have a calling to work for children of developing countries and this experience added to my motivation. I work currently in a child protection unit in Helsinki. The experience did serve me to be a better worker. (Lawin of 2009.)

Sanga Sangai has been one of those places that have attracted Diak students to work for the financial support even after returning back home.





PICTURE 7: Children of Bal Bhojan knew the Finnish song “Hämähämähäkki” Perfectly. Here playing with Anne Meretmaa 2008. Photo: Juha Tanhua.



PICTURE 8: Children of Sanga Sangai 2011. Photo: Kyösti Voima.



PICTURE 9: Diak students at Women's organization Dristi Nepal 2011.
Photo: Kyösti Voima

3. 5 Vietnam: Starting with Vietvoc - heading towards Hope and finally also social work partner

3.5.1 Vietvoc rooted Diak in Hue

The beginning for Diak's cooperation with Vietnam is opposite to many other beginnings of partnership. Diak was involved from 1997 to 2002 in so called Vietvoc project that was a Finnish government funded multiprofessional project. The main emphasis of the project was on vocational education. From Finland eight Universities of Applied Sciences (that time Polytechnics), vocational training schools and adult learning centres were joining together. From Vietnam end there were five partners. Diak's role was in the health sector of the project from the beginning. (Vietvoc Project plan 1997.)

The purpose of this cooperation scheme is defined in the Vietnamese national development programme as follows: *"For the purpose of diversifying the career forms and orientation, teaching and handing down of trades, to establish a technical education in society and integrating vocational training with general education."* (Vietvoc Project plan 1997.)

The crucial question was: how to create such a program that fulfils the needs of education that could be transferred to local circumstances in Vietnam. Hue Medical College showed its interest and readiness to active cooperation with Finnish partners. (Voima 1999.)

Lecturer Kyösti Voima was representing Diak in health team. Other health team members came from Lahti and Hämeenlinna (Tavastia). There was a multiprofessional health team (nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists). Teacher exchange took place with Hue University and Dong Ha secondary school. (Eila Niitamo, personal communication 13.2.2012.)

Kyösti Voima in his report of 1999 is thinking about the future development: *How to create such a program that fulfils visitors' needs of training in health sector and offers such experience that can be transferred to those circumstances in which visiting teachers work after returning back home. Such deeper understanding of local circumstances is expected also from the Finnish teachers are going to offer in Vietnam.* (Voima 1999.)

As part of the Vietvoc project the health team in which Diak was involved had following goals: Curricula development: The contents of the curriculum for nursing education in Hue University should be developed in cooperation with Hue Medical College. The aim is to concentrate on the development of the curriculum specifically for the school year 2000-2001 for both semesters, as well as to plan, carry out and assess/evaluate the education in Hue with the help of a Finnish nursing teacher. The teaching development plan will be drafted in cooperation with Vietnamese teachers on the local level. The work shall be carried out as such that, DIAK, Lahti Polytechnic and Hämeenlinna Center of Education, Tavastia's health and social care departments shall send, in turn, a Finnish nursing/health care teacher to Hue Medical College to work as a development tutor or counsellor. Hue shall choose a counterpart teacher for each tutor coming from Finland. The counterparts shall also train and practice on nursing and health care teachers and shall be prepared to pursue the responsibility of developing nursing teaching education in Hue Medical College. (Vietvoc Project Plan 2000.)

It's very interesting to read the project plan of Vietvoc health sector now in 2012 after having many years of cooperation with Hue Medical College in Hope project. In these discussions over the years 2008-2012 it has turned out that influencing the curriculum development in Vietnam is extremely difficult. Yet, the basis for cooperation between Diak and Hue was created in those years and it's been developing in different ways since.

3.5.2 Bilateral relations with Nursing Faculty

Ms Eila Niitamo tells that after Vietvoc projects she and Mr Kyösti Voima were working with Dr Thai, Dean of Nursing Campus, in order to enhance the students' clinical practice and the evaluation process and forms. The plan was that two students from Diak both during spring and fall semesters should be sent to Hue University. As the Vietvoc project ended 2002, Diak's cooperation with College of Medicine and Pharmacy continued on a bilateral basis. The personnel in the nursing faculty started to understand the goals of Diak's students' studies and clinical practice. Students as well as visiting teachers participated in some theory classes kept by American visitors in the health care issues as well in environmental issues. (Eila Niitamo 2012.)

Since 2005 Diak students were able to take part in a mountain health care centre projects with other American students and also every semester they visited another hospital in the northern part of Vietnam (Eila Niitamo 2012). The possibility to participate in this program of Medrix from USA was closed after 2008, at least temporarily, so a few Diak's students could enjoy this very good cooperation.



PICTURE 10: Kyösti Voima in the beginning of Vietvoc project with colleagues. 1999. Photo owned by Kyösti Voima.



PICTURE 11: Dr. Luc Ha and Diak student at the village child birth place. 2008. Photo: Anne Meretmaa

Personally I visited Vietnam for the first time in spring 2008 and stayed for two days at the camp and clinic with our two students. An American company "Medrix" had brought about 15 nursing students from one American University to a five week's camp together with three American teachers and quite a few Vietnamese students and teachers. The camp and clinic formed a good combination of theory and practise and I must say that I was quite impressed. (Meretmaa 2008.)

Because of the contract made during Vietvoc the number of students to be sent to Hue was limited in the early years of bilateral cooperation. Many times only two students went to Vietnam annually. Sampo was a male student who had been there all alone but his experiences were good:

I learnt a lot from myself. I survived alone in totally different culture and new environment. And I made many friendships which are continuing also nowadays. I graduated in December 2007 and since then I have been working in acute ward in HUS/HYKS Psychiatry center. One of the patient groups in our ward are multicultural patients as tourists and asylum seekers. I need good knowledge of different cultures in my everyday work. It is very important that we do not confuse cultural behavior for example to psychosis. (Sampo of 2006.)

In 2007 I met for the first time with Dr Thai in Nepal. He met seven Diak students there and was wondering why we send only two to Vietnam at the time. Only that way I found out that there are not any more limitations to the number of students. Ever since there have been 4 to 8 nursing students every semester in Vietnam, so in the past few years we have been catching up.

In 2010 Hope intensive course was held in Vietnam and that time there were eight of our students participating in the course besides doing their normal three month placement over there. That week gave us a good perspective on cooperation between Finnish and Vietnamese nursing students. Diak students could also help two Vietnamese students coming to Finland for exchange after that course.

Some students of later years share about their experiences in following:

I did my placement in Vietnam in spring 2011. I chose Vietnam because I have been interested about Asian cultures for a long time and that kind of student exchange was one of my dreams that I have had. Before I chose Vietnam I heard lot of positive things from students who has been there earlier. Vietnam was also a place where we could have a practice in hospital and that was important for me. (Minna of 2011.)

When I look back at the time I think the best experiences was to explore totally different culture and get to know new people. I found new way to think and live .I guess that every placement has pretty strong impact to the people who has done it. I think my placement made me mentally a little stronger and more aware of myself. (Minna of 2011.)

Over the weeks we have learned some positively surprising facts about health care in Vietnam. It's been good to see how well children's national vaccination campaign is realized here and especially that it's free for all. Otherwise people have to pay for just about everything. It's been sad to notice how bad the social security is and how the poorest people cannot always get any treatment. (Enni of 2011.)

Cooperation with Nursing Faculty has been rather easy since there has been an international coordinator for years. Since 2010 Dr Phuong, a paediatrician and nursing teacher, has been acting as an international coordinator for Diak students in Hue and it seems that she has worked hard to make some changes in the challenging situations.

Phuong recalls that her first contact with Diak was with Mrs Anne Meretmaa. I met her at her first visit in Hue 2008. DR. Phuong tells about her experiences in receiving and supervising Diak's students:

To do the supervision for Diak students, we met some challenges: the language barrier, the differences of culture and nursing training in Vietnam and Finland. During these years, we have developed cooperation with Diak. We had the HOPE project and expand the exchange program: Vietnamese teachers and



students had opportunities to visit and study in Nepal and Finland and learn a lot from these places. (Dr Phuong, personal communication 19.2. 2012.)

For student exchange program in Hue, we made some changes such as: had orientation at the beginning of practice period, add lectures which were telling about the common diseases in Vietnam, add case presentations and health education in clinical practice, ask for weekly report of students to see their progress and difficulty, had closing ceremony including the report from supervisors and students, had ending assessment and feedback for each of clinical department. (Dr.Phuong 2012.)

Also Dr. Binh has been involved both in Diak students exchange and in Hope project over the years and he comments following: *The exchange program: Vietnamese teachers and students had opportunities to visit and study in Nepal and Finland and learned a lot of: Nursing profession, Health and education organization, Culture, language (Dr Binh, personal communication 2.3 2012.)*

The Finnish students knew more about health care system in developing countries, the everyday challenge that developing countries have to solve. They know more the tropical disease, parasitic disease., also the Nursing profession, Culture, language which is very important in current multicultural environment. (Dr Binh 2012.)

3.5.3 Hue help – finally placement for social work students

Diak's social work students had been questioning for years, why they can't go to Vietnam for placement. There had been some trials in early years of cooperation but no agreements. One problem was maybe that social work as a phenomenon is a rather new concept in Vietnam. There are University studies of sociology but no training for social workers as such. When discussing during my first visit to Vietnam with University people I understood that many of the functions social workers have in other countries were carried out by community health workers and different ngo's.

I was, however, determined to find some contacts during my visit. Dr Thai and his colleagues were very helpful. We visited several places for orphans, handicapped children and some kindergartens. Through one American teacher I found a big Catholic compound with Theological seminar, orphanage, preschool, kindergarten and groups for handicapped children. We sat down with the head sister and made an agreement that I could send some students to their compound during next semester and they could choose which unit they would like to work at. I was very happy. (Meretmaa 2008.)



Two social work students went to Vietnam in autumn 2008 and after they had got there, some government policy was announced that foreigners could not work in religious organizations. I had too helpless students in Vietnam. It reminded me of Nepal 2001 when the Bhutanese refugee camp had been closed down from foreigners. Had been in the situation before! The staff of Nursing Campus tried their best in helping the students find another place. Partly they succeeded but not to employ them for full days. Our present partner Hue Help, a British based NGO, working with orphanages, was found by the Diak students who were left without placement in autumn 2008. They came to Hue Help in the end of the placement and got just glimpses of what it could be. Hue help had shown green light to Diak students and it was agreed that our nursing partner would take care of the practicalities also with Hue help.

Volunteer coordinator Joshua Zukas responsible for cooperation with Diak at that time recalls that Hue Help got involved with Diak through the Hue College of Medicine and Pharmacy. They had agreed to take responsibility for a group of social welfare students and they were looking for placements where they could practice their skills. The college came to us knowing that Hue Help was well connected to the various community activities in Hue and we agreed to work together to provide a fulfilling placement. (Joshua Zukas, personal communication 8.2.2012.)

Although we had a number of volunteer programmes running at the time, normally focusing on English teaching, we had never been asked to supervise students for their academic programmes. The biggest challenge for our first group was to differentiate the English teaching programme from the Social Welfare student placement programme so that the volunteers and students could focus on using the specific skills they had come to use. (Joshua Zukas 2012.)

I started emailing with Joshua Zukas in spring 2009 and I can read from the emails that we made rather concrete plans for the new group to come. I felt confident about the plans. I had a chance to visit Hue again in the autumn of 2009 and that time four social work students started in Hue Help. It was good to be there and continue negotiating directly about the plans for them. A big challenge was to see that even in teaching English to orphan and street children there is a social work aspect included. Students held also life skill lessons for the kids. They were as well carrying out some small scale research related to the children. (Meretmaa 2009.)

We continued with a few more groups in a similar way. The concrete places where students practised and worked changed. In summer 2011 Hue help presented a way to strengthen the cooperation: *One of the biggest changes made was to agree to share responsibility of the students with the newly estab-*

lished Social Welfare studies department at the University of Hue. As we have been setting up volunteer placements for a few years, we felt that we were in a better position to work out the practicalities of the programme (visa assistance, registering locally, organising placement sites etc.) but that the academics at the University would be better equipped to supervise the students. Diak was presented with the idea and fully cooperated with the implementation. (Joshua Zukas 2012.)

The present voluntary coordinator Kim Megson says: *Our role in the co-operation with DIAK brings us a different aspect to our work in Hue. We are happy with our English teaching programme and the role it plays in meeting needs in Hue, but building relationships with placements that will particularly benefit from DIAK Students and their expertise in social work has added a new dimension to our activities, particularly in the shelters. The DIAK programme allows us to assist the children in more ways.* (Kim Megson, personal communication 14.3. 2012.)

Kim elaborates that in the early stages of the new agreement between the three organisations the students had some initial confusion about the roles and responsibilities of DIAK, Hue Help and SORCODE. *We are confident this issue has now been resolved however. It is important to ensure that volunteers are clear about the roles of each organisation before they leave Finland. There has also been some occasional difficulty pinpointing exactly which of the skills they have developed on their course can be most effectively utilised in Hue, and the specific working context of Vietnam (where children's shelters operate very differently from in Europe). Giving the volunteers a structured programme to follow is not always easy to organise in Vietnam.* (Kim Megson 2012.)

In the future SORCODE should take a more active role in the working component of the programme, thinks Kim Megson. SORCODE has expressed interest in providing a work training orientation for the DIAK Students in addition to the Hue Help cultural orientation. Students would divide their time between the two offices, but would complete most of their planning at SORCODE where they can learn from the expertise of the staff there.

I feel there could be a more structured assessment at the end of the placement so we can track what worked, what didn't and how the experience has helped their studies. To help with this last point, receiving an overview of their University modules would be helpful. (Kim Megson 2012.)

Hue Help appreciates DIAKs' commitment to supporting us in our mission of helping the lives of disadvantaged people in Hue. We hope that we facilitate an enjoyable and productive experience for the volunteers that allow them to learn both as people and as social workers. It has been a pleasure working with DIAK and we hope we can continue for a long time to come. I believe (and I am sure that SORCODE will agree) that the students make a positive impact



and learn much from their new experiences in Vietnam. (Kim Megson 2012)

Our placement consisted of life skill workshops where we thought hygiene, group skills, first aid, traffic behaviour... Besides we made for Hue help a small scale research about children's and young people's wishes concerning their future studies and possibilities for funding. Hue help needed this information for starting a new project. (Saila of 2009.)

I was very pleased with my placement. I got to work in an orphanage and among other things teach English. I also wanted to learn to know the culture. I would have liked to learn even more about the religions, habits and social services. Supervision worked well with both Sorcode and Hue help. It was great to get to know people at Hue help. (Laura of 2011.)



PICTURE 12: Children of An Tay oprhanage in Vietnam 2009. Photo: Saila Ohranen



PICTURE 13: Children in An Tay orphanage in Vietnam 2011. Photo: Laura Keronen



4 DEVELOPING THE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

4.1 International information days

Over the years international campaigns/fairs/ meetings open for all Diak students have become more and more important. In the early years of Diak's exchange the information was organized individually by the coordinator of each Diak unit. It could be seen that the number of students in small units willing to go abroad was really big. I'm sure partly because the information simply reached all the candidates face to face. The experiences shared by students having been abroad were extremely important and whenever students came back with great excitement, the number of applicants grew immediately for next semester or next year.

In the past 5-6 years the information days have been organized jointly so that also coordinators and international office people have been able to attend them. Now the same information is equally shared with all Diak students. The local colour still comes from the role of the students who have been abroad.

4.2 Student selection process

From the very beginning students have applied through the international office but ways to apply have changed over the years. Already in 2001 international office formed a working group to design a model for requirements and those requirements have been in use ever since. To be qualified for the exchange, students are interviewed to evaluate the motivation, goals, success in studies, language skills and health. (Kekki 2001.)

In spite of the fact that these requirements have been written down already in 2001, the practise has varied over the years in different Diak units. In small units it's easy to know if a student is qualified to go abroad, because he/she is known to the teachers in everyday life. In big units like Helsinki it's been necessary to interview the students carefully and consult study advisors, student counsellor and school nurse from the beginning. Later on these procedures have become common for all. Yet they have been clarified and crystallized over the years. Nowadays the cooperation between study advisors and international office has increased and decisions are made together. In the last couple of years international staff and study advisors have met twice a year and today there finally is a common understanding that's shared by all concerned.

4.3 Student exchange as a process - orientation, supervision and reflection

All students who apply for the international exchange must take an orientation course before going abroad. That applies also to students in the English Degree Program (DSS), even if the students go to their native country for placement. Although the decision of going abroad is made at early stages of studies, the international studies take place not earlier than after professional study units (courses) have been done. Usually the students have studied about two years before the international placement.

I remember what happened after the first big group of students I had sent abroad from Kirstinkatu in 2001. There was not yet an organized orientation for the group, but we used part of the multicultural studies' lessons for the preparations. It was the first group that spent three months abroad and they had to take a one week's seminar afterwards related to the exchange. It included presentations of each student, general discussions and one day of individual reflective discussions. A couple of students gave feedback that they felt like idiots when they had to share so much of their experiences. Already during the next semester an orientation program started at Kirstinkatu. In Alppikatu there was an orientation booklet *Study and practice abroad: guide-book for international study possibilities in Diak*. 1997 which was one of the elements of orientation programs developed in different parts of Diak.

Kyösti Voima recalls that he and some colleagues had arranged orientation for students going abroad also in Alppikatu in 1997. He had got some feedback from a person working in Foreign Ministry that there were some problems in placements in Asia. Diak students had left abroad without any orientation. The same thing was said by Ms Mallik in her feedback of the early years of exchange. Kyösti and his colleague Riitta Järvinen asked for a permission to arrange orientation for students on an experimental basis. It meant lessons on cultural topics in the afternoons at Alppikatu. Several teachers were involved with short lectures from their area, such as religions, transcultural nursing, and communication. (Kyösti Voima, personal communication 2.4.2012.)

From 2002 on orientation was organized jointly in Diak Helsinki. Kyösti Voima and I started to develop a program and in the early years also the international managers were involved. All students from Southern Finland were invited to the orientation as well as students going to developing countries from any Diak unit. Some students came; some did not, because there was no arranged funding for coming from other parts of Finland at that time. Yet, the feedback from the partners was clear: the better the students were prepared, the fewer problems came up. Of course it wasn't always that way.

Just one immature student could get the whole group carried away and the stupidity was multiplied.

In 2003 Kyösti and I applied for funding to plan a virtual orientation course that was to be used in all Diak units. We had seen a few examples of other polytechnics' virtual orientation courses and it was clear to us that we wanted something else. We decided that we would never go to only virtual orientation but always organize face to face teaching as the main thing in orientation. Our goal was to help the students to go deep into the process of orientating themselves to a new culture, new working habits, personal change, group dynamics as well as help out with practical arrangements starting with finances and vaccinations. Excellent support has been given for years by Diak South school nurse Merja Toivainen. (Meretmaa & Voima 2006.)

Orientation has been one of the strengths of Diak's exchange program. Feedback from the field is positive and as mentioned before in comparison with the early days of Diak it has been said that the students are better prepared for the new culture than before. (Bijli Mallik 2012; Esther Thapa 2012.) That can be seen also in the reflection discussions held always after the placement as well as read from students' reports. My experience is that students say quite directly and honestly if they haven't been prepared well in advance.

Diak's international people, coordinators both here and there have an important role in preparing the trip, realizing it and making it successful. Teachers' excitement was also very "contagious". Not to mention the peer support. (Kati, Nepal 2004.)

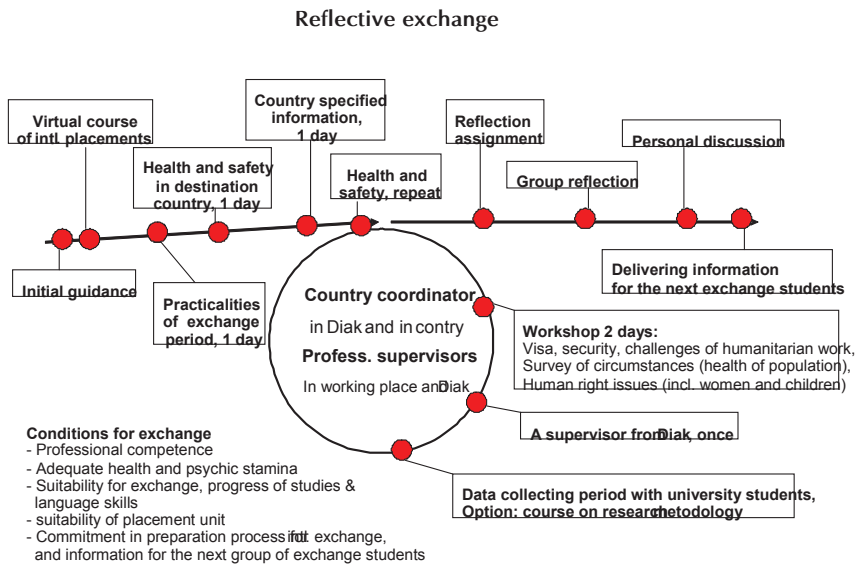
During the international placement the students work and study under the tutoring and supervision of a local supervisor of the partner organization. To help that process the Supervisor's handbook was first published in 2002, made as the part of my thesis work in teacher education. Later on the booklet has been revised and modified to meet the changing needs of Diak's curriculum and placements. Diak teaching staff supervises the practices and coordinates the cooperation with the partners. Soon after the students have returned back to school, a reflection is organized. In the reflection day the focus is on the personal growth process and professional development. Also a personal discussion with the supervising teacher is used to help the students to analyse their experiences in personal and professional levels. (Meretmaa & Voima 2006.)





PICTURE 14: Diak students at reflection discussion after placement 2010.
Photo: Kyösti Voima

Later on team Hälikkä, Kainulainen and Voima developed a model of these principles where the whole process of exchange is visualized in one picture.



During the international placement the students work and study under the tutoring and supervision of a local supervisor of the partner organization. A contact person living in Swaziland has also an important role in tutoring and supervision. In addition to the assistance of these local tutors Diak teaching staff supervises the fulfilment of the study goals of the students, and coordinates the cooperation with the partners. Soon after the students have returned back to school, a reflection is organized. In the reflection day the focus is on the personal growth process and professional development. Also a personal discussion with the supervising teacher is used to help the students to analyze their experiences at personal and professional levels. (Hälikka, Kainulainen & Voima 2010.)

4.4 Thesis in developing country – model developed by Anne Määttä

The idea of modelling Diak's thesis process abroad was further developed so that Anne Määttä from the research unit went to Bangladesh for a few weeks in autumn 2004 with one Diak student planning to do his thesis there. She had studied Diak's exchange process well beforehand and applied the process to collecting data for thesis. (Määttä 2005.)

It was very helpful for us as teachers supervising thesis work in developing countries to follow the guidelines recommended by Anne Määttä. At least in Helsinki thesis process had changed recently and after that all teachers were involved in thesis seminar groups. One group consisted always of students willing to do their thesis during the placement overseas. (Määttä 2005.)

Anne was making some recommendations for the process. She said that good preparation beforehand is urgent. It would also be very helpful if Diak had permanent placements, so that the places where data should be collected would not change at last minute. Important is also the sharing of information that students do beforehand in information days and orientations. Other students' experiences help in understanding the circumstances I'm going to. (Määttä 2005.)

Very challenging according to Määttä is also the supervision of the thesis work at the placement. There might not be anyone able to supervise the data collection or if there is, finding time for that could be difficult. Very important is also cooperation in choosing the topics for thesis. If the topic comes from the partner, it's more likely that there is also interest in supervising and of course, the idea is that the student could be useful also in this way to the partner's institute. (Määttä 2005.)

Students who have done their thesis abroad have told many stories about the problems they face in collecting data or finding literature abroad. Sometimes the topic has to be changed because it's just simply not suitable for the partner.

I collected the theory part of my thesis before going to Nepal which gave a good starting point for field work and interviews. I learned to work in networks and ask questions from local people. Embassy gave me a lot of material about women and girls in Nepal. I interviewed 12 girls/women in Nepal. I had a lot of photos that I showed while presenting the thesis to different audiences. My thesis was published in Diak's series and many students have borrowed it and used as resource material for Nepal. I've worked as a writer also after that and published many books. My experience in child protection was good and I've worked in special children's home for five years. It's been more easy to work with people from different cultural background. (Kati of 2004.)

I had problems to do my thesis about the primary topic about the girls that had been trafficked. While I was there I couldn't get permission to see and interview these girls. So I had to start from the scratch while I was already in Nepal. I think doing thesis in Nepal helped me to learn more deeply about the country. I got much help from the Diak's local contact person, Esther Thapa for collecting data. It was very interesting to search information in one specific topic and learn more intensive about that part of the country. I ended up doing my thesis about Nepali women who had converted to Christianity. I feel it was very good learning experience to interview people with different kinds of life stories and read the history of Christianity in Nepal. Not only getting data but visiting in libraries, book shops, different organizations and churches was something I wouldn't been able to do otherwise.(Laura of 2005.)

It was very challenging to collect material for thesis work abroad. I had to be well aware beforehand of the idea of my research as well know what kind of information I wanted to collect. I couldn't go back and recheck. It was also challenging to use a translator because of the credibility of the results. It was also challenging to find good resource material abroad. I had to get it, because I could not have found information about sex workers in Bangladesh. It was a hard but very good and very rewarding experience. (Katja of 2006.)

From my placement, I got to learn about children's situation that are in risk of "becoming" street children. Then for my thesis, I was working with children who lived in the street. I think the experience gave me a more holistic perspective about the phenomenon and the nature of the society. I also learnt that I enjoy more for curative than preventative work i.e. I like to work the ones most in need, but I don't mind both and believe more in the latter. It was great to see how one child who lived in the street did not really go to school but could name capitals of every country. He was very street smart and made a living through flattering tourists. (Lawin of 2009.)



5 HOPE – NORTH SOUTH SOUTH PROGRAM

5.1 Beginning in Basel 2006

It was in year 2006 that a new era in Diak's cooperation with Nepal and Vietnam started. Diak had a chance to invite Esther Thapa, the Nepal coordinator, for first time to Finland as Diak's guest. It was a moment for great reunion with many bunches of students that had been in Nepal by that time. After visiting Finland, Esther was invited with Tuovi Leppänen and Anne Meretmaa to European Association for International education (EAIE) conference in Basel, Switzerland, where we held a workshop on "Successful placement experiences in developing countries"(EAIE application 2006).

The workshop was full and a success. Quite a few participants wanted immediately to start their own cooperation through Esther with Nepal. For Diak perhaps the most meaningful was the idea of finding a funding agent for cooperation. In EAIE the Asia Link was introduced. We got very excited! But, the EU funded project was on hold and we could just hope that it would continue. (Leppänen & Meretmaa 2006.)

5.2 Full of confidence – Nepal 2007 (winter)

Anyhow, we did not give up. Tuovi Leppänen and I decided to arrange a meeting in Kathmandu the following winter 2007, invited Diak's partners in Nepal, both Lalitpur Nursing Campus and St. Xavier's Social College as well as a few partnering ngo's such as HDCS, LWF and Richmond Centre to join us as well as Diak's seven exchange students in Nepal at that time. Invited was also our long term partner, Dr Thai from Hue University, Vietnam. Two partners found in Basel were invited as well: Mr Werner Ebener from University of Applied Sciences of Upper Austria (Linz) and Dr Vesa Nuorva from Central Ostrobotnian University of Applied Sciences (Cou). Diak paid the expenses of the meeting and travelling of Dr Thai. Other partners came at their own expense.

In somewhat special circumstances we held a most inspiring three day meeting that was creating wide perspectives ahead of it. The circumstances were challenging because on those days there was a strike in Nepal and all the local partners had to come walking. It meant at least a one hour walk for each one of them. Also there was a heavy power cut and we had almost no electricity. We used day light available and papers and pencils. Some people had their laptops and they could show pictures and their power points to all



only when we were sitting squeezed together on the floor. We were frozen. We had to wear all that was available. But for some reason I remember it as one of the most inspiring trainings I've ever attended. At the end we decided that we'll continue whatever way possible. We had an idea of a funder and of the limitations, but it didn't stop us from dreaming of and carrying out very utopistic plans. In the end the group discussed shortly, whether the institutions they represent could be ready to apply funding for future cooperation.

Conclusion was that we should proceed together. It was also shortly discussed, how to share the work in the future and it was decided that Diak will act as the coordinator for funding possibilities and partners will share responsibilities in different parts of the application writing process. (Leppänen & Meretmaa 2007.)



PICTURE 15: Preliminary meeting in Nepal 2007. Circumstances were modest but the meeting was full of enthusiasm and excitement. Photo: Vesa Nuorva

Our basic idea was to include the most important working life partners in Nepal to the process – we had after all no idea where to get the funding from – and one of them, SP Kalaunee from HDCS recalls the first meeting: *This brought people from all the three countries - Nepal, Finland and Vietnam (even from Austria, I think - representing the university of Linz). Following the*

personal and organizational introduction the meeting gathered the wish list on 'what we can do together' and 'what should be the area of priority'. There was a personal sharing, group discussion and presentation. Although there were several details, the gist of each group presentation was the 'need of doing some kind of educational program that would include mutual learning'. The meeting was very valuable since it brought the people working in education together, and set a common ground on the area of need and interest. (SP Kalaunee, personal communication 27.2.2012.)

5.3 Planning meeting – Finland 2007 (autumn)

Only six months later Diak received preliminary funding for North South South Asia. Luckily for us Nepal and Vietnam were the countries included at that point. So the following meeting was set up in Helsinki in autumn 2007. Representatives of partners from LNC, St. Xavier's and Hue Nursing were invited and a partner from HDCS which at that time was still strongly on hold.

The three day meeting was already one step further than the meeting in Kathmandu. Diak's Finnish partners were COU that had already been in Kathmandu meeting, Dr Vesa Nuorva being the key person. Tuovi Leppänen had in-between moved to work in teacher Education College (TEC) in Jyväskylä and we decided to invite TEC into the program and include teacher education as an important component in the planning. (Halonen 2007.)

One part of the meeting was to learn the LFA (Logical Frame Work) -method which turned out to be useful for the application process. Our trainer in the method was Anne Määttä who had already been involved in Diak's Asia process through her visit to Bangladesh. However, the meeting was able to make a preliminary draft for NSS application and decide on the name of the network. Holistic Partnership on Social Work and Health Care Education (Hope) was approved by all and ever since I have not heard any negative feedback about the name. (Halonen 2007.)

Already at that meeting the student research was discussed. Student research was seen as a point where cooperation between Finnish and Asian partners is important. However, academic research can be seen as a long-term goal, so if we concentrate on that, do we miss something more important and perhaps more current matter? In future it will be important to develop coherent unities of academic research instead of occasional and isolated research. Teacher mobility should be primary to student mobility, so that teachers would be able to instruct the students. (Halonen 2007.) It's surprising how right this pre-meeting was. Later on Hope partners have realized both in phase one and phase two that joint efforts on research are most important. (Hope applications 1 & 2.)

At the end of the meeting six of the students who participated in Kathmandu workshop were invited to the last session of the workshop to comment on the plans. This is what they wished for: 1. *What does common guidelines mean in social work and nursing education?* 2. *Guidelines are good, to have the same subjects etc. and partners can pick up their own point of view.* 3. *Are there real teacher resources for this?* 4. *Who guaranties the content of the intensive courses, that it is useful for students?* 5. *Who takes care of the administration etc. for these activities?* 6. *Are there time for planning etc. in teachers schedule, before the students arrive?* 7. *Studies should be planned before hand?* 8. *Both sided student exchange would be great.* (Halonon 2007.)

Later on we have many times realized how right the students were while being concerned especially about the resources for Hope project. There has been a constant battle about that at least in Diak, where most of the coordination work has been done.

Again SP Kalaunee who was present for the second time commented the meeting: *The second step of the project, the planning meeting in Helsinki, Finland was another very important meeting. This meeting brought clarity in 'what and how' of the project include naming of the project as HOPE - Holistic Partnership in Education! It was the right name; everyone was excited because it was catchy and meaningful name. We were able to set the goal, objectives and activities including the details of how it will be carried out and how much it will cost. So, it was the project details! However, the draft was circulated to each member for comments before submitting it to the Finnish foreign Ministry for grant. For me personally, it was my first visit to Finland. I enjoyed being there. It was a time of exposure - exposure to new geographical location, to new people and culture, and all of these were nice learning experiences.* (SP Kalaunee 2012.)

5. 4 Network meeting – Nepal 2008 (autumn)

When looking back at the application and thinking of the first planning meeting of Hope intensive course in Nepal it must be said that there was a lot of work to do. To face the realities in Nepal as planning the first intensive course concretized the needs. We realized that we could not to reach out to huge changes in southern partner colleges, but it would possible to work out a plan for an intensive course that would be unique already in Nepal where St. Xavier's Social College and Lalitpur Nursing Campus had not cooperated before. Also for Hue Medical College it was the first time to work so closely with a social work college.



The network meeting was inspiring and creative as all the meetings of Hope partners had been from the beginning. We were not afraid of arguing and disagreeing if it seemed necessary. Simply: we learned to know each other very well by planning all together. There was no patronizing from the north, even if the funding issue was delicate because everyone wanted to go abroad, but the budget was cut down by Cimo. We managed to make a plan that was agreeable to all. The meeting ended up with a plan for the intensive course, where the main topic should be student centred learning. Teachers should have a course of their own for three days, social work and nursing students separate courses for three days. (Upadhaya & Meretmaa 2008.)

5.5 Intensive course – Nepal 2009 (winter)

The first Hope intensive course was held in Nepal February 2009. All partners had sent representatives and the structure of the course was as planned beforehand well. However, there was a surprise waiting for the planners of the social work intensive student. All was planned wonderfully, students having an important role in the process, but the plan was changed and Finnish teachers had much less time for teaching as planned beforehand. The same applied to the nursing intensive as well. Vietnamese and Finnish nursing teachers could co-teach but there was very little time for own lessons. But at the end, the feedback was good and both students and teachers were pleased about the outcomes of the week. (Meretmaa, ed. 2009.)

The major findings/ outcomes of the teachers'course were the following:

- Participatory approach in teaching is necessary and an effective means to teach the students.
- Came to know about the curriculum, teaching methodologies, cultural differences and different challenges that are faced during teaching in different countries (Nepal, Vietnam and Finland)
- Similarities between nursing course and social work course
- The need of the two professions coming closer
- The participants also want to see the continuation of the HOPE project. (Meretmaa, ed. 2009.)

It was good to hear that the ten Finnish students participating in intensive course were pleased with getting to know students from Nepal and Vietnam. Especially the social work students said that they got friends from St. Xavier's and they met each other many times over the three months.

And most of all it was really important to hear the feedback from Nepali and Vietnamese partners.: Radha Devi Bangdel from Lalitpur Nursing Campus

says: *Many changes took place in cooperation with Diak, e.g. teaching learning method moving towards student centred, teachers exposing more to the nursing research, modifying activities and supervision of international students. etc. The most rewarding things in this cooperation is the empowerment of teacher and student in terms of international nursing standard and training with teacher and student exchange program. There were no difficult at all because of the understanding and cooperation between Diak and LNC. (Radha Devi Bangdel, personal communication 13.2.2012.)*

Father Antonysamy thinks that the intensive course was very meaningful for the staff and students of St. Xavier and he says: *In the beginning there was interaction taking place with our students and staff. It had created a lot of interests in the mind of the students and trying to learn from Diak students and got motivated. They began to appreciate the other culture and system in social work. These interactions led to cooperation in academic and cultural programs and our students had great academic orientation and their attitudes changed, because Nepal students used to just some how to get through the studies but after this cooperation they started to become active. I am very happy about the whole program and there is a lot change in the whole department to better academic atmosphere and research mentality and appreciation of different cultures. (Antonysamy Antony, personal communication 8.2. 2012.)*

There were a few Finnish teachers in the intensive course as well. I have asked from two Diak teachers, Katja Päällysaho and Eija Rautasalo, what they think about their experience now that a couple of years have passed: *The experience was extremely rewarding. Together with a colleague of mine I taught participatory social work methods in family work in St.Xavier. The group of students consisted of both Nepalese and Finnish students. It was good to discuss the differences on the meaning of family, roles of children, mothers and fathers within the two very different cultures. The discussions on the concept of the family and the methods of social work were very fruitful. The teaching involved active participation of the students and was very successful. (Katja Päällysaho, personal communication 27.2. 2012.)*

It was also interesting to share ideas about social work teaching with colleagues in St. Xaviers. I expected that the Nepalese teachers would have relied on Asian social work literature. Instead, they used the same Anglo-American literature as we do in Finland. We discussed the global and local views on social work together with our Nepalese colleagues. I also learned a lot from the visits I was able to do to a street children organization and to a drug rehabilitation center. (Katja Päällysaho 2012.)

I understood that students are "same". They are coming from many cultures, but for instance the skills of the nurse develop during the studies. Student's nationality or the country is not any negative issue. The global ideas develop best



in the multicultural teacher and student team. One way is this kind of Hope project. I understood the meaning of international teamwork. I have been able to share my experiences, many times. We had students from Nepal in our hospital. We have discussed many times about those students. The experiences were good. (Eija Rautasalo, personal communication 3.2. 2012.)

Vietnam had sent two nursing teachers and it was the first time for them to participate in this type of course. *Dr. Bing recalls: Methodology: small group discussion created a friendly atmosphere, encouraged participation, educational fun. The level of integration was appropriate and sufficient. Pre-test and post-test should have been included. Coop activities were great, well applied and practical. Since there was no linguistic preparation, teaching material should have sent over for early reading and reviewing. (Dr Binh 2009.)*

The core group met after the intensive course and shared about the outcome of the first intensive course of Hope 1. Feedback from teacher intensive in nutshell: *Excellent, effective, helpful, good methodology shared, steps towards future networking, increased understanding of different issues applied to different countries, good sharing: giving and receiving, even more focusing on some issues needed. If more time, views could have been deepened, happiness about all going so smoothly. A lot of interpersonal sharing, learning a lot about each other inside Nepal and outside, very encouraging experience and there was thirst for more sharing in teaching. Thankfulness for the experience, enrichment of professional life, and delight about the commitment of teachers, something unique was accomplished in Cimo's intensives; carried out the wild dream of teachers from different teaching traditions learning together student centred methods. (Meretmaa, ed. 2009.)*

Feedback from social work student intensive: *Good experience for both Finnish and Nepalese students, wonderful warm ups by the students, some new methods learned in both sides, good to have experts from outside, but also good to have different teachers teaching, place was good. Atmosphere was good; students enjoyed working together, reflection: How could there be more cooperation between teachers in the future? Who should take first steps to make the dialogue continue? (Meretmaa, ed. 2009.)*

Feedback from nursing student intensive: *Vietnamese students felt confident with Finnish and Nepalese students, content was reasonable, environment nice, students had a chance to share their feelings, all teachers were involved in teaching process, students had enough time for their presentations. (Meretmaa, ed. 2009.)*



PICTURE 16: International teachers at St. Xavier's Social College during Hope 1 teacher intensive course. Photo owned by Vesa Nuorva.



PICTURE 17: Nepali students Reena and Yam with Campus Chief Mrs Rebecca Sinha, exchange teacher Dr Eija Rautasalo and some staff in Pieksämäki.

5.6 Exchange from Nepal to Finland 2009 (spring)

Two students and one teacher from St. Xavier's arrived in Finland only a week after most of us had returned home. Due to some misunderstandings there were some difficulties in getting started at Järvenpää, but things were sorted out. Katja Päällysaho, who was responsible for the supervision, recalls the beginning: *The visit of the Nepalese teacher to Finland was a bit challenging. The visit was planned well in advance: both the contents and timetable of the visiting teachers were communicated several times via email and face-to-face. In Finland it seemed that there was still some confusion on both the contents and timetable. Furthermore, on my return, I had an injury that kept me away from work for 2 weeks during which time the visit took place.* (Katja Päällysaho 2012.)

The students started with placements, since there were not classes of their level going on at the time of their arrival, but they got a good orientation of their housemates, a big group of Nepali students who live in Järvenpää and study in Diak's Degree Program for Social Services (DSS). The Nepali group is quite big in size and personally I've found them very helpful and cooperative in different occasions. All our Nepali guests have been well received by the students and there is always Nepali food available whenever someone is visiting. These students have also been of great help in our orientation program for going abroad. So many Diak students have wanted to go to Nepal and there is always someone from DSS who is willing to come and share about the country, culture, social and political issues.

Dipti and Roopa, Nepali social work students, have been very active in answering my questions and they will in following quotations share about their experience in Finland as exchange students: *Placement at the youth house was an opportunity for me to explore the youths, their problems and the help being offered to them in macro and micro level. It was surprising at times to see the similarities in the problems faced by people of similar age of two countries despite the difference in geographical setting. Nonetheless, it was quite depressing to see how limited helps were present to youth back in Nepal while there so much was being offered. From Diak, the biggest learning would definitely be the cultural exchange- in and out of class. The timely guest lectures, independent working day and relevant field visit enhanced learning experience. Through all that, we got a chance to reflect on the social, culture and economy of Finland.* (Roopa 2012.)

My placement was in a private kindergarten. The learning experience there was paramount because not only did I learn about the child care provisions of Finland, I got the opportunity to make friends with the children and Nina (placement contact person). We spent much of our time with the managerial

aspect of the kindergarten; and most of my time was spent observing the routine and trying to help out because of the language barrier. Slowly, I started to get involved with children in their drawing and craft activities. It allowed me the experience to compare and contrast child care in Nepal and Finland (Dipti 2012.)

Also studying was of great importance: I attended the International Discourse in Disability and Human Rights module in Diak. I think the classroom dynamic was very multi-dimensional; and there were many visits that were beneficial. We visited many disability centres, wrote learning diaries and had analytical discussions on the issue. I feel that the disability part of the module was highlighted more than the human rights aspect; however, all in all, the course was beneficial in creating discussions among the students. The lecturers and facilitators were very interactive. I actually came back to Nepal and did my one year's final placement in ABBS (an organization that holds Day Care centre for differently abled children) and somehow, I think I was motivated after the module to take up this challenge. Because I had participated in this module, I think it was easier for me to adjust to the environment at ABBS and become involved with the children. I think I benefited in experiencing a different perspective that allowed me to be sensitive towards issues of differently abled (Dipti 2012.)

This exchange has been an eye opening experience for me since on reaching there and seeing all the facilities people enjoyed there, it became obvious what all we lacked and how important was the role of the government in providing social security to the people of its country. Besides that, I have become more tolerant to new people, experience and culture and appreciate the uniqueness in each diversity. (Roopa 2012.)

Father Antonysamay has also told about the feedback St. Xavier's people gave after returning home: Our staff and students came to Diak and when they returned many started to look forward to come there and so they began to develop themselves in different ways which was a very welcoming change. In the future we will like to have more exchange of students. We can work out a plan so that the travel expenses can be met by the individuals and the board and lodge can be met by the institutions or the other way: the travel can be met by the institutions and other expenses can be met by the students. (Antony 2012.)

There were also two nursing students from Nepal who had a very rewarding experience in Pieksämäki. Ms. Radha Devi Bangdel comments on the experience: The challenges with first Nepali nursing students in Finland were different culture, language; student centred teaching learning method, advance nursing with high tech etc

I had a chance to reach out to both Yam and Reena through email as to most other foreign partners and ex-students. They both recall the time in



Finland as a very positive experience. They also felt that in most things they had a good orientation beforehand after meeting Finnish students in Nepal. Yet, the extent of cold weather was more than they could expect beforehand. Students also mentioned the warm welcome and hospitality of teachers, students and hospital staff. (Yam; Reena 2012.)

I have gained so much experience and knowledge from this exchange program. I am thankful to HOPE for giving an opportunity to explore Finland. We had very warm welcome and no need to take worries regarding accommodation. Due to some formalities I meant due to some blood tests (MRSA) we were not allowed to enter hospital for 1 week. After result we started our practicum which was quite exciting and full of challenges; Challenges in the sense that we were short of Finnish language. Later we succeeded on learning some basic terms which helped us a lot. As a whole it was worthy stay. We learnt so much on operative procedures, preoperative assessment and postoperative management of patients. (Yam 2012.)

Reena says that *hospital posting over there, it was really so good, i felt like i never worked there, everyday would be a new day for me, i would know new people and new work over there, the staffs of pieksaman sairrala were really kind for me, but the most difficult part for me was the language over there plus none would speak english over there and it was bit difficult for me to care the patients in first som weeks, but i gradually learnt som basic finnish and it was easier,there i learnt many new things, like the operation theater posting, the sterile techniques which most european countries use, assisted in most knee arthoscopy, more then as a working std staff nurse i was a friend to them. (Reena 20012.)*

Ms. Rebecca Sinha, former Campus chief, and SP Kalaunee visited Finland May 2009 as teacher exchanges as well. Ms. Sinha did teaching especially in Pieksämäki. Her famous lessons about the Kenguru model that she held the first time also in Helsinki and Lahti are well remembered by students who participated.

SP Kalaunee was teaching in several places and recalls his experiences: *I taught at DIAK Helsinki, DIAK Jarvenpaa, and Ostrobotnia University of Applied Sciences (Ilvaska) and participated in the student teachers presentation at Jyvaskyla Teacher Education College. I was able to teach the students of Social Work on Multi cultural learning and disability in Nepal. I also taught the working life people (the mission secretaries) on the 'mission work'. It was a time for teaching and learning for me. I could observe the classes and learn about educational pedagogy in Finland. Also I had opportunity to learn about other social aspects - immigration being one of most severe social issues in Finland, richness of educational technologies and resources, cooperative people. I had opportunity to learn and compare the richness with lack of resources in Nepal.*



This project brought the people of the three countries together in mutual learning. (SP Kalaunee 2012.)

5.7 Network meeting – Vietnam 2009 (autumn)

Hope 1's second network meeting was held in Hue, Vietnam, in the autumn of 2009. I participated in the meeting with Seija Mantila, a nursing teacher of Diak. I felt I needed nursing teacher to accompany me because there is only nursing education in Vietnam and that way also the intensive course should be on nursing. Tuovi Leppänen as a teacher educator would have been needed there as well, but she was participating in the planning through skype.

I was very impressed about the arrangements made by Nursing Faculty. All the staff was prepared to participate in the network meeting – all together about 16 people. When thinking how busy the people were, both teaching and carrying their duties in hospital in the mornings, I really appreciated it. It was also good to see how important it was to make the plan for first intensive course in Vietnam really starting from the needs of the nursing staff. (Luc Ha & Meretmaa 2008.)

I've mentioned before that even if the main focus in Nepal was in teaching methods as was planned beforehand, the wish for guidance in research methods had come up several times – and it came up now again. Qualitative research as a method for collecting data seemed to be both unfamiliar and interesting for everyone. Besides the research teaching methodology was also very acutely needed as a topic. The discussion was very vivid for all three days but it was left for the core group to make the final plan for the course. (Luc Ha & Meretmaa 2008.)

Vietnam network meeting had also an important role in planning the application for Hope 2. The need for research methodology was mentioned also there and the core group decided that it should be included in the program's second phase.

5.8 Intensive course – Vietnam 2010 (winter)

There were some challenges in organizing the second intensive course in Vietnam. This time Finnish partners were giving a lot of freedom and space for the planning the content of the course – based on the discussions and group work of the networking meeting the previous autumn. But, due to timing problems all Finnish teachers had not a chance to meet beforehand and therefore planning of the teacher intensive and student intensive were



done separately. Besides, the idea was that also Nepalese and Vietnamese teachers would equally participate in teaching. However, when planning was done in Finland and communication happened by email, their roles were not as strong as planned before. (Meretmaa, ed 2010.)

At the end both parts of the intensive courses went well and were appreciated, but especially in the teachers' part there was a language problem. All teachers were present most of the time again, but many could not speak fluent English and simply could not understand everything. It was given feedback that whenever there is another course in Vietnam, some translation must be provided and possibly written lectures, power points or at least key words should be handed in beforehand. (Meretmaa, ed. 2010.)

Jaana Tilli was the other Diak nursing teacher participating in the intensive course and I let Jaana share her experiences as a visiting teacher: I participated in Hope intensive course that lasted for 5 days. *I was member of the teacher intensive course for two days and as a teacher for three days. The pedagogical method we used was team teaching. There were also several visits in hospitals with the local members of the network week. I had several meetings with Ms Meretmaa and Ms Mantila before the exchange so had some kind of expectation beforehand. I was fully aware that I was expected to teach with Ms Mantila. I also knew well the topics of our teaching.* (Jaana Tilli, personal communication 8.2. 2012.)

I had a wonderful experience in Vietnam. The most important experience for me was that I understood what our students go through during the exchange in Asia. I heard that there are similarities but also differences in nursing in Finland, Nepal and Vietnam. I understood that all countries provide their inhabitants the best possible Nursing and Health Care based on the medical and nursing knowhow they have. We Finns do a lot of nursing research and our nursing is totally based on research. In research we use both qualitative and quantitative methods and that way we may improve our qualitative in nursing. We have also transcultural differences in nursing between patient-nurse communications. Asian partners have better knowhow in cultural differences than we. But I figured it out that there is not right or wrong ways to nurse, there is only different and cultural ways to nurse. (Jaana Tilli 2012.)

Well the most challenging for me was to understand the Asian way to speak English. It took two days to understand what words were spoken or said. Of course to teach in English was also a little bit difficult but we, Ms Mantila and I, planned so well our power point-slides in beforehand and that helped with the vocabulary. (Jaana Tilli 2012.)

The most meaningful outcome for me was to understand what exchange program means for the participants. Secondly I understand a little bit more what our students go through during exchange abroad. I can give our students space

and time to tell about the experiences. It is sometimes hard for the student to reflect what she has learned during her exchange. There are so many things like medical treatments which are done abroad differently than in Finland. Third experience was to see how the family took part to patients care. The Nurse had big but different kind of role in patients' health care and nursing. I must say that I've grown as a teacher after visiting Vietnam. I have spoken with colleagues in many meetings and told them to participate exchange programs. I have also more often to found and gave students the time and space to reflect their memories during the exchange. (Jaana Tilli 2012.)

Dr Phuong comments from the Vietnamese point of view in following way: For this cooperation, the benefits come to both sides. The Finnish teachers and students knew more about health care system in developing countries which is very important in current multicultural environment. In the other hand, Vietnamese teachers and students could enhance their capacity through exchange program and from them, the Vietnamese community can have the benefit of qualified health services activities after the ending of project and cooperation still is the most concern. (Personal communication 19.2.2012.)

Time and fund always are difficult to deal with in such cooperation. We would like to keep this cooperation for a longer period eg 10 years and more. We also would like to expand the activities such as: have Finnish teachers doing teaching in Hue, conduct cooperative research, hold Teachers have experience in continuing medical education class, etc.

Dr. Lan who was in Nepal and came to Finland says: Teaching for foreigners is a learning process, the student have experience when studying with foreigners. We can share our culture that is very important for the nurse in taking care of patients. For both sides, we have chance to practice English. Vietnamese students feel more confident after studying with Finnish students. (Dr. Lan, personal communication 20.2. 2012.)



PICTURE 18: Dean, Dr. An together with Jaana Tilli and two Nepali students who participated in the intensive course.



PICTURE 19: Exchange students Duong just before going home with tutoring teacher Seija Mantila and Anne Meretmaa 2010. Photo: Ton.

5.9 Exchange from Vietnam to Finland 2010 (spring)

The planning of student and teacher exchange from Vietnam to Finland was made very well. As Ms. Seija Mantila and I participated in network meeting in Hue September 2009 we had a chance to interview candidates for exchange. These students had a chance to get well prepared and since their exchange started first in March 2010 they could work in intensive course with Finnish students. (Mantila & Meretmaa 2009.)

Seija as a nursing teacher prepared placements for the students and we planned together a program for the teachers Dr. Lan and Dr. Luc Ha. It was also good for the exchange students that they knew people in Finland beforehand and that way orientation was already on the way.

There were two nursing students, one girl Duong and one boy Ton, who came to Finland. They both stayed in Järvenpää with the Nepali DSS students (degree students) and did their placements in small health units around that area. Ton is recalling his experiences: *I lived with Nepali students so that I learnt another culture, the ways to live in Finland, make friends. I visited hospitals in Finland and knew the ways they treat and take care for patients, learn about Finland society, learnt the ways they take care elderly people. Learnt about Disability and Human Rights. Thank you so much from bottom of my heart. I also miss Finnish people, society and beautiful places.* (Ton 2012.)

Duong recalls her memories in similar way: *When I came to Finland, I got help from the teachers. Really they took care us so well, Seija took me from the airport and at last day she also took us to the airport too, they arranged my placement, my accommodation and my routine, so I had a chance to study, to practice and to adventure Finland. I practiced in Kellokoski hospital, a mental health hospital, in department for the elderly people, it was not easy when we have different language, and I couldn't use English to talk so I just sat with them, also I have my supervisor explained for me about the patient's condition, the other nurses also help me. I used to help them in meals, or in the restroom...* (Duong 2012.)

The other one of the teachers who came to Finland for exchange was Dr. Lan who had also participated in the Nepal intensive course. She had been actively involved in Hope project during network meeting and intensive course in Hue and had also done some supervising for Diak students. Dr. Lan was rather well prepared when coming to Finland. She thinks about the students' process as well as future cooperation and says:

Our students met some difficulties when taking part in the project such as: language, trans-cultural, and training program (they had to reserve their studying result and then continue studying in next year). In cooperation with Diak, both Vietnamese teacher and students get so many benefits. Teachers and stu-



dents of two countries have opportunity in learning more about the nursing health care system of the different countries. We would like to have a class on nursing research for for Vietnamese and Finnish student because it is still a very new branch in Vietnam. I hope our cooperation will last long forever. (Lan 2012.)

Dr. Binh had also participated in Nepal intensive course as well as in all Hope activities held in Hue. He had been an active part in Finnish students' exchange process for years. Now in spring 2012 he will be coming to Finland as an exchange teacher, well prepared since he knows the process. He summons the exchange process:

The exchange program: Vietnamese teachers and students had opportunities to visit and study in Nepal and Finland and learned a lot of: Nursing profession, health and education organization, culture, language. (Binh 2012.)

The southern partners have expressed that their needs are: to improve the capacity of nursing staff, strengthen research activities, develop teaching methods, get familiarized with new nursing education systems as well social work education in developed country and strengthen team building (Hope 2 application).

5.10 Network meeting and intensive course – Nepal 2011 (autumn)

We had planned to continue with Hope 2 without any break – assuming that funding would be available. However, due to changes on the funding side there was a one year break in between. Active contacts with the partners continued and especially Diak had exchange programs going on with Nepal and Vietnam – but only one way. As the next phase started we were given funding even if the number of applicants had grown really big and there was another network in nursing were partners were from Nepal and Vietnam. We had applied for two intensive courses and for two network meetings as before, but all networks received only one intensive course and one network meeting for the two year funding period. Luckily we were experienced and well-structured network and started working according to that plan.

In between we had invited one more partner from Finland. Actually, not a totally new partner, but the nursing department from Cou. Diak does not have an English degree program in nursing yet, but Cou has and that way we were able to offer an English degree program both in social services and nursing, as well as teacher training in English for our partners.

The first network meeting and the only intensive course of Hope 2 were held in Nepal in November 2011. It was decided that the separately funded

network meeting should be held in Vietnam in autumn 2012 and that meeting could be evaluating and closing the whole process of Hope 1 and 2.

We had also learned from our previous experiences and decided do the planning so that all Finnish partners would meet each other beforehand, make a draft for each workshop and share it with respective partners in Nepal and Vietnam. It almost worked out. The only missing part was that we were not quite early enough. Especially since Nepal had their holidays just before the course, some Finnish teachers did not have enough time to make the drafts before the holidays. (Meretmaa, ed. 2011.)

The intensive course was now decided to keep as a joint effort, yet partly separate for teachers, partly together with teachers and students of social work and nursing from the three partner countries. That was a very good choice. Teachers learned from each other's way of teaching and students could experience different teaching methods during the same week. Student intensive course was divided into four workshops and in all both social work and nursing students and teachers participated. Three workshops had also a field work day; one was working in groups that day. (Meretmaa, ed. 2011.)

The atmosphere both in the network meeting as well as in the intensive course was very relaxed and positive. The Nepali partners had made excellent preparations and especially at the main venue of the intensive course, Lalitpur Nursing Campus, everyone had a role that was thought beforehand so that all practicalities went very well. This time we also took written feedback from all participants that the group evaluating Hope 1 and 2 can benefit from them. Feedback will not be discussed in detail in this booklet but Hope project will end up evaluating itself by the end of Hope 2. (Räsänen 2011; Meretmaa, ed. 2011.)

From Diak teachers present Ms. Riitta Pistokoski and Dr. Elsa Keskitalo have commented their experience in Nepal by answering a few questions I sent them by email. Riitta says: *I am interested in different cultures and in developing social work education. I am especially interested in Nepal because many of my students come from there and I find it important to understand their culture. Before the course I was participating to meetings where we were planning the IP course. I also prepared my teaching/ workshops there, read articles and other material for my preparation etc. At the course I attended the planning and evaluation meetings there, had the workshops together with colleagues and also visited some of our partner organizations in Kathmandu.* (Riitta Pistokoski, personal communication 7.2. 2012.)

It was my first time in Nepal and Asia in general so I didn't know so well what to expect. But I tried to prepare by reading earlier reports and other material and ask from colleagues and students. I think I was well prepared and things went mostly according to our plans. I found my experience very rewarding!



Most challenging was probably the space and equipment but we managed just fine. Personally I learned a lot from Nepalese culture - something also about Vietnam. I found it very interesting and rewarding to have this kind of course together with teachers and students from three different countries! I have been telling about my experiences to my colleagues and had interesting discussions also with my students. I have learned to understand my Nepalese students more and that is very important. (Riitta Pistokoski 2012.)

Elsa Keskitalo says that it was good to learn more about Asia and Nepal, the university system, social work studies and social services' system and societal circumstances in overall, about circumstances there, how is life at the moment in a country like Nepal, what is the quality of social work studies and social services' system etc. I had a general overview based on a written material and information and discussions with the Hope coordinator and colleagues. We were able to prepare, but certain things had to be left to be agreed at place there. All worked well. (Elsa Keskitalo, personal communication 21.2.2012.)

The exchange was eye-opening experience in many ways: to see the circumstances and learn to know local colleagues and students and social services' providers was important. Equally important was to adjust your teaching to local circumstances and work together with an international team of teachers was a good learning experience. You simply learn so much more by experience in real international circumstances than in paper. The idea of an intensive course proved working in practice. Most challenging in the process was to be able to prepare for joint teaching, without knowing the real circumstances and local colleagues in advance. (Elsa Keskitalo 2012.)

The overall feedback from the intensive course was positive both from students' and teachers' point of view. As a coordinator I have looked at the process closely from the very beginning. I think that the core group had learned something from the beginning and especially from the earlier intensive courses. The first intensive course in Nepal was still working carefully in three sectors; divided between teachers, social work students and nursing students. With the understanding we had at that time, it was probably the only way to do. It had not happened before that social work and nursing colleges in Nepal had worked together, it had never happened before that Vietnamese nursing college had been working together with a social work college (even with Diak only with nursing education).

Hope had barriers to overcome and we did that respecting each other's cultures. Of course we Finns who are used to working in multiprofessional teams think it's natural but it was good for us to see that things happen at different speeds in different countries. The main thing is that changes take place – both in north and south. Hope partners have all been willing to learn from one another. Only that way is the change in a process like this possible.



PICTURE 20: Workshop one made an exposure visit to one of the Kathmandu slums. Here Diak student Laura on her visit. Photo: Vesa Nuorva.



PICTURE 21: Nepali and Vietnamese students at the cultural event that closed the student intensive course 2011. Photo: Vesa Nuorva.

5.11 Exchange to Finland from Nepal and Vietnam 2012 (spring)

The on-going semester is reserved for Hope exchanges from Nepal and Vietnam to Finland. There will not yet be students or teacher feedback included in this booklet, but Diak's seminar: Adventurous Decade in Partnership with Asia to be held April 26th will be reviewed in this book. Short written presentations will be attached to this text. Also, all teachers and students from both partner countries will be in Finland at the same time; contrary to Hope 1 where we had a Nepal winter and a Vietnam winter. This way it's also possible to organize a big seminar where partners can meet, but also former Diak students (now alumni) are invited to meet each other and teachers from Asian colleges they have studied at.

At the moment I'm writing this there are two nursing students from Nepal in Diak North, Oulu, two nursing students from Vietnam in Diak East, Pieksämäki and two social work students in Diak South, Järvenpää. Nursing students will be going to Centria, Kokkola, for studies in the beginning of May.



PICTURE 22: *"When comes to nursing, race doesn't matter because first we all are humans and above all we have the heart of nurses"* (Alka and Sita 2012.) Nepali students at Oulu university hospital intensive care unit with their colleagues. Photo owned by Alka.



PICTURE 23: "The blissful moment of being as energetic and happy as the younger ones during the practical training." (Smarika 2012.) Photo taken at Smarika's placement.

There will be two nursing teachers coming from Vietnam and they will visit Pieksämäki and Kokkola, two nursing teachers coming from Nepal and visiting Oulu and Helsinki and two social work teachers coming from Nepal who will visit Helsinki, Järvenpää and Ylivieska (Cou). All teachers will visit Jyväskylä Teacher Education College. That way we have shared the joy and responsibility of having these guests. For a few days we will also receive the principal of St. Xavier's Social College and all will participate in the extra network meeting and Asia Seminar.

The last activities of this phase of Hope 2 will take place in autumn of 2012. There will be a network meeting, some teacher exchange from Finland to Vietnam, some students exchange from Finland to Nepal and Vietnam and an evaluation that will be carried out about the whole five year process.

6 OTHER ACTIVITIES BETWEEN DIAK AND ASIA

6.1 Etra project –Diak as evaluator

In Nepal Diak has also been involved in evaluation of a tobacco intervention program funded by Foreign Ministry. The preliminary contact with the project took place in Nepal as Diak's former unit director Dr. Heikki Hiilamo was visiting the country in February 2009. I happened to be there with him and in fact we almost missed meeting with the local Hetip director Sundar Thapa due to some misunderstandings. (Hiilamo & Meretmaa 2009.)

The Health Education and Tobacco Intervention Program (HETIP) have been carried out in Nepal in 2001–2012. The nationwide program has reached hundreds of public schools and hundreds of thousands of people in two thirds of all the 75 districts in Nepal. It has been organized by Scheer Memorial Hospital of Seventh-day Adventists in Banepa, Kavre, with the help of ETRA Association (ETRA-liitto ry) in Finland. The project has been largely funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland. (Kivelä 2012.)

An interest in the effects of smoking and tobacco use on health and well-being, and an initial agreement for cooperation was soon made between Diak, SMH and ETRA Association. The overall objective in the cooperation was 1) to enhance the capacity of social work and health sector professionals and health policy decision makers in tobacco control and 2) to develop consensus and political commitment for tobacco control in the country. Diak's role in the cooperation consisted of these elements:

*Educating nursing and social work students of Lalitpur Nursing Campus, St. Xavier's College and Scheer Memorial Hospital College of Nursing in Nepal, as well as international exchange students from Diak and its partner institutions in Finland. This was done during a two-week intensive course in February-March 2011.

*Educating tobacco control decision makers in a VIP-seminar in February 2012. This was the responsibility of Dr. Heikki Hiilamo and lecturer Sami Kivelä. Over 80 participants from ministries and other government bodies, NGOs, the media and educational institutions could share their common interest in health promotion and this hopefully paved the way for new ventures in promoting a healthier life in Nepal. Dr Hiilamo's presentation about tobacco control gained a positive response.

*Evaluating the HETIP program. This was the responsibility of Director of Research Sakari Kainulainen and Sami Kivelä. The evaluation report was published in the VIP-seminar in 2012. (Kivelä 2012.)

The intensive course in 2011 was planned and implemented using a model developed previously for international cooperation between Diak and its

partners in Africa. The first part of the course consisted of teaching on health promotion, use of intoxicants and research methodology. Then students went to collect research material in the field and finally some preliminary results could be given at the end of the course. The course provided new experiences in learning in an international environment. It combined theory and practice and showed how to carry out a large data collection phase with the help of dozens of research assistants. The quantitative survey data from secondary school students included over 9000 sheets, and the qualitative data comprised staff interviews (individual and focus group) and observations in over 30 schools. (Kainulainen 2011; Kivelä Sami, personal communication 12.3.2012.)

The results show that the HETIP intervention has succeeded as a preventive tool and in helping to give up the use of tobacco. Secondary school students as well as staff members have often found the program personally beneficial. Furthermore, it has created positive attitudes in the community and in some cases shaped the curriculum. It may be worthwhile to consider separate anti-tobacco programs for male and female students in the future. As such the HETIP program has been competent and efficient in complementing the promotive and preventive health education given by various interest groups in Nepal. (Sami Kivelä 2012.)

The project was a wonderful opportunity to learn about international cooperation, the Nepalese school system and project work. Also co-editing the evaluation publication was a good experience. Although the schedule was tight at some points, the process was very enjoyable as a whole. I very much hope to cooperate with our Nepalese partners – or should I say friends – in the future too. (Sami Kivelä 2012.)



PICTURE 24:
Directors for
Etra intensive
course:
Sundar
Thapa,
Sakari
Kainulainen
and Sami
Kivelä.
Photo: Kyösti
Voima.

6.2 Impact of the exchange and good tips for future students

The experience really had an impact on my life. I travelled to Kolkata several times after the internship and volunteered there and in other parts of India and also Nepal. Nowadays I am a volunteer country coordinator for an NGO that is placed in Kolkata and try to visit there as often as possible. I could not see my life without this experience and the possibility to go back over and over again. India and Nepal seem to have the skill to catch part of your heart. (Anni 2001 India.)

After my exchange in Asia I was never same person anymore. I´ve been working in many kinds of organizations in Finland helping different kinds of people. Especially in Bangladesh I got very strong professional ideas and tools how to help very poor people. I am sure that internships have affect my professional tools and person. I´m sure that employers have seen those tools and attitude to diaconia and social work. I still have many friends from Nepal and Bangladesh. (Kristiina 2003 Bangladesh.)

Kristiina was one of the founders of Mano a mano –organization helping children in Nepal on grassroot level. She continues: In Nepal we saw many kinds of NGO´s which did important work. In other hand we found out that there are still too many children that we can help with small work without big organizations. We wanted to help children in Nepal as straight as possible and know were charity money really goes. I was in Mano a Mano board almost five years. Board members did together many kinds of projects and happenings. (Kristiina 2002-3 Nepal.)

I think it was an experience that has richen my life. People I met and the opportunity to learn from different culture and from the land that is so beautiful in so many levels. I think the best thing and what I miss the most is the nepali people I had privilege to meet. Diak´s local contact person Esther Thapa was like a mother to me and I miss her the most. I also remember well how nepali students took me to eat momos with chillitomato sauce and we talked hours about weddings in Nepal. We still send emails for each other. And then the children in Chidren´s home, they were just amazing. I think that the experience has affected my present by the way how I see the third world countries and especially how I see Nepal. I´m still following the news from Nepal and it feels very personal what happens there. In my current employment being in Nepal has not have such an effect because right now I am in maternity leave and studying at the university. In my studies the impact has been that I have taken Development Studies courses. (Laura 2005 Nepal.)

My time in Asia has absolutely had impact on my present life! I could say that how I am today is because of my past. Unfortunately I´m not having a job



around Asia ;) but hopefully someday I will :). But one of my dreams to have my very own small NGO has become true. And for sure it is partly because of my DIAK placements in Asia; Vietnam and Bangladesh. The work I saw them doing there inspired me to do something good by my own as well. (Katja 2006 Vietnam and 2007 Bangladesh .)

I can only tell this with pride: DIAK gave me a unique opportunity at that time to focus my studies to something that really was my personal interest. On my present life as a missionary worker and development aid worker I am dealing with many of the same phenomenon that I experienced in Diak placement of those days. I am privileged also to have this previous experience to work alongside with people of other religions and other cultures. Today it is my everyday reality. (Veli-Matti 2009 Bangladesh.)

Finnish people are very honest and hardworking. I found them very devoted on their work. Their love with patients was so spectacular. Their sincerity, honesty and hardworking nature have changed me a lot. And I am trying myself to make the same. (Yam 2009 Finland.)

I was very lucky to know about a country in Europe, know another culture, society. It changes my thinking about the world. Although I was late one year in study, it changes my learning environment so much (friends, schedule, works, thinking, a little sad) but i don't regret for my decision. I hope that my trip to Finland will help for my jobs later. (Ton 2010 Finland.)

Yes. I got to know many different people, cultures, nations etc! I learnt a lot. (Prakash 2012 Finland)

Language was the biggest challenge. At school things were fine, but when I needed to go outside, I got a sense of alienation primarily because of the language. Finding a job was also difficult without the language. However, now as I can handle basic communications in Finnish, I feel much better everywhere I go. People talk a lot about racism in Finland; I haven't experienced yet myself though.(Manoj 2012 Finland.)

DSS is a very good degree. When I am studying at university, I see how much I have already learned during the DSS time. But some confusion are there in the structure. There is so little Finnish language for international students, and lack of appropriate placement places is so common. To students aiming for further education, DSS is a good choice, but if you are an international student and want to work after graduation, you'll be haunted by one question: work...but where??? This could be improved in the future. (Manoj 2012 Finland.)

Studying in Dss has been fun all the time and at times it really got tough having to manage time with work. I enjoy the group work and interactive sessions in the class. However, some aspects of the study modules were not very properly managed and planned, so it was a disappointment at times. Over all the practical placements and the international placement really boosted my moral and I got to learn a lot. (Suraj 2012 Finland.)



I truly believe that this education in Diak will definitely help me in my future career, as I want to work with communities and also in the Development sector as well. I think it is a good link to my future plans and everything that I learnt in Diak is like a bridge to what I will be doing for my future. (Suraj 2012 Finland.)

Students were also sharing their ideas and wishes for future students.

I do warmly recommend a period in Asia while studying. No need to be afraid. People there are welcoming and open hearted and help with all issues that will rise. It gives a truly different view point for life and social work and helps at least me in my work in Finland as well. (Anni 2001 India.)

Go! It's a unique experience; hardly anyone has regretted leaving for exchange. Nepal is a wonderful country, you never know what happens to you afterwards... (Kaarina 2001 Nepal).

Go for it! Be brave, get to know local people and culture (Minna 2001 Nepal).

Diak's internship in Asia might change your life. Three months in your life and studies is a short period but foreign country is long time. Keep your heart and mind open and you have great opportunity to learn something from yourself and whole world. In Diak's internship will get signs to your heart that never disappear. (Kristiina Nepal 2002-3, Bangladesh 2003.)

It's good to read about the country before you go there. Respecting other cultures is important. Leave at home the attitude "westerners are better" and learn about the way Nepali people struggle in their severe circumstances. In old cultures you can find wisdom that's worth searching. The kindness and politeness of people is touching. You will not return back the same. (Kati 2004 Nepal.)

Studying and spending part of it abroad are special moments in everybody's life. After graduating and getting stable job those things are out of reach. (Sampo 2006 Vietnam.)

Go! Experience! It will be unforgettable! (Katja 2006 Vietnam and 2007 Bangladesh)

Do not act as an expert! Ask, show your interest! Remember that local people have maybe "more developed senses" than you; they can sense if you devalue their life or look them down even if you don't show it. It works also the other way: show them love and respect, they can sense it! When you tell about your life, tell in a way what is understandable for them, universal themes. Avoid talking about money, our wealth or material issues. It will only build wrong illusions for them about what they don't have in their life. Talk about God in general, about your believe. Try to find issues that are common for all human beings in eyes of God. You'll be surprised; there are more similarities than differences! Respect other religions. Sometimes you'll face situations that you don't know what is a culturally appropriate way to act. Ask someone who you have built confidential relation! (Veli-Matti 2009 Bangladesh)



I think the most important advice that I would like to give is to have fun. I know there is an academic part to this project; but I think 'fun' is the most crucial element of the project. If the students do not have fun then the experience does not become memorable. Apart from this, I think it is important to be open to challenges, be communicative, share ideas and keep a personal learning diary. (Dipti 2009 Finland.)

Another important thing is I think, to be in touch with teachers from home university. In our situation, I think there was less cooperation from the teachers (with exceptions because some were really helpful with notes), but I think the reason that the cooperation was lacking was because the home university had not made it clear that we were going to be in an exchange program and we would require their utmost cooperation. This time around, I hope they will have a more cooperative staff. (Dipti 2009 Finland.)

I was a little nervous when i landed to Finland but the welcome which i got in airport was really appreciable, then all my worries went away, I would love to say the new upcoming students that there is nothing to worry about going to Finland, everything is well managed and we will get lot of love and care. When we first stepped to Pieksamaki ,we had some adjustment problem with the language over there, for me I was lost so many times going to work and the market, and i think we should be oriented little about the temperature, because we though knew it was cold over there, did not know to how much extent. (Reena of 2009.)

For the coming exchange students i would like to say them not to worry about anything, if it is possible learn some basic finnish, lik which place is this,what is the price for some stuffs,do u speak english,where is the market,how to we go to som places etc,and not to worry about the adjustment over there,the people over there are so friendly they love you all. (Reena 2009.)

Language is foremost thing. Since finnish people are very nice and honest anyone can adjust easily.(Yam 2009 Finland.)

For my experiences, I want to give some opinions that would help my friends in future exchange student. I hope they receive their routine (the time and the place in Finland) when they are still in VN just for good preparations. I hope they have a choice to choose their placement or they can practice in some place where they can use English as well. (Duong 2010 Finland.)

My recommendation for students who want to go to Asia is that find out about the culture before you go there, be curious and respect the culture. The placement in Asia is a unique opportunity and you make the significance of your experience by yourself. (Minna 2011 Vietnam.)



6.3 Improvements/challenges for cooperation

Ms Bijli Mallik (Iper, India):

The most rewarding experience of this cooperation is that the children have benefited a lot with the social and cultural experience that the students brought with them. Not only they like the new experience but they learn special language, songs and activities like photography, use of colour as a mode of expression and therapy, creative work, etc.

Dr Raili Gothoni (Iper, India):

I was privileged to learn to know DR Gosh and especially Dr. Mallik who dedicated herself to work with children in need. The cultural and multicultural questions became a part of my life and my work. We had a good cooperation in research. Results were published as a book named A Future for the Children - evaluative research from Calcutta, ed. Raili Gothóni. Helsinki: Diakonia-ammattikorkeakoulun julkaisu. B: Raportti 3, 1999, 46p (ISBN 952-5266-06-0).

Ms Esther Thapa (Nepal):

As the world becomes a smaller place and cultural exchange helps us better understand each other. I feel that some of the students are so eager to learn about Nepal. Unfortunately they have no language classes. Without a basic course preparation in Finland and in going straight to their placement here they do not have to learn. If they could have about a one-month basic Nepali language course I think their experience would be even richer. They could talk to waiters, busboys, shopkeepers, neighbours and get to know Nepal in a much deeper way. If I could change one thing, I would add one-month Nepali course prior to the beginning of their placements to be hosted in Nepal!

I am happy to have played a role in easing the students' time in Nepal. They have taught me a lot as well. The friendship forged with students that came when they were 20 and are now 32 is amazing. We exchange small gifts with each batch of students that come and go. They send me Marimekko serviettes, Muumin mugs and other gifts and I send them back Nepali things. It has been a wonderful twelve years getting to know the people of Finland and about Finland. Now my home has many elements of Finland and I am happy about what it symbolizes – friendship. For me Finland has become my second home and I have the closest friends there. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to work with you all. God bless you.



Dr Phuong (Vietnam):

If possible, we would like to keep this cooperation for a longer period eg 10 years and more. We also would like to expand the activities such as: have Finnish teachers doing teaching in Hue, conduct cooperative research, hold continuing medical education class, etc.

Dr Bing (Vietnam):

The Finland expert spend long time in VietNam (at least 3 month) so we can chance to improve our profession, language. Training program for teacher, so the Vietnamese teachers could follow the short or long term in Finland.

Ms Jaana Tilli (Vietnam):

Well the most challenging for me was to understand the Asian way to speak English. It took two days to understand what words were spoken or said. Of course to teach in English was also a little bit difficult but we, Ms Mantila and I, planned so well our power point-slides in beforehand and that helped with the vocabulary

Dr Elsa Keskitalo (Nepal):

To learn to know the social circumstances and university context in a developing country in Asia, to be able to broaden the perspective from Europe to a global perspective in general and in social policy and social work in particular. I have shared my experience and talked about the importance of global perspective in social policy and social work with my colleagues and with students. I have also discussed in my working community about a possibility to further co-operation with the partner university in Nepal. We have a challenge to increase international exchange between our Finnish Social Work Master programme and respective Nepalese one in the future.

CONCLUSION

Diak in Asia

In many ways Diak's "story" with Asia has been a great success. First of all, hardly any university or university of applied sciences in Finland has sent as many students to Asia for placements. Interest towards Asia has been amazing over these years. It's been the same also towards Africa. It seems students in nursing and social work have a heart for the needy in the world and that's how it should be. Yet we have been very conscious that we are not sending anyone to Asia or Africa to save the world, but to learn more about this world – and learn more about themselves as future professionals who will be working in a multicultural world.

Secondly, Diak has been very fortunate with the partners in Asia. We have had certain key institutions and key coordinators there from almost the beginning. Most of them have shared their experiences in this booklet. I believe that we have learned together. We have made mistakes but have been able to discuss them and find better ways of doing things.

Students may not have always been easy to work with and that has been a learning process in both ends. Sometimes individual placements inside a country did not serve best the placement goals or the institutions or orphanages moved far away. Luckily new options have opened up.

Thirdly, North South South and Hope project opened a new era in Diak's cooperation with Asia. Finally Diak was able to interact equally with partners in Nepal and Vietnam. Starting a University level exchange program was a natural continuum for the previous cooperation. We knew the partners beforehand and it made the activities on a new level easier.

Our Finnish partners TEC and Centria were involved from the very beginning of Hope 1 and the cooperation has been smooth all along the way. From the very beginning of the planning process of Hope we wanted to work according to Diak's values, mutually, not making all the decisions in north and "throwing" them to South. Our partners are the best ones to tell how well we succeeded in that.

NSS is a mobility program and our experiences have shown that there is need for further cooperation. It's hopefully only a matter of time that HEI IKI or some other program will open new avenues for cooperation even in deeper level.



Development of international activities in Diak

Working for 14 years in Diak's international team without a break gives some insight into the process that has been going on in Diak. First of all I realized only lately that in the late 1990's there were in Helsinki Alppikatu some good beginnings for orientation of students going abroad. My colleagues Raili Gothoni and Kyösti Voima at least have been involved in the teaching. In Järvenpää I can read from the Hong Kong material that there has been some orientation, at least in writing, for students going to Hong Kong. Besides, they took part in Felm's course. Some preparations were done also in Pieksämäki for the Varanasi group. Personally I had started orientating the students in Kirstinkatu in an informal way.

Already in the very beginning of this century Diak's international team started discussing about the orientation program and making plans for basic requirements for orientation and a couple of years later for the whole process of going abroad. That development has continued over the years and even if Kyösti Voima and I have been responsible for that on Diak's level for years, more and more people have been involved in the planning process and also in the realization of it. Besides the face to face orientation the role of virtual studies have become more important but will hopefully never be the only means of orientation.

When looking through Diak's international strategies for about a decade you can see that the role of developing countries has become more and more visible even on a strategic level. I think that in reality Diak's cooperation with global south has been strong and visible in reality from the very beginning.

What has been very meaningful is the role of research department that has been active in international activities for years, also with global south. Our partners in Asia have been requesting support in research methods from the beginning of Hope project and the topic have been in the centre of Hope 1 and Hope 2.

Future in my eyes

Leaving Diak's international activities is almost like letting your own child take off. This time only it's me, the mother who is retiring, and letting the grown up children continue. It's not difficult to leave the international activities at this point. There are so many able people working on them with fresh thinking and great ideas.

It's most difficult to give up work that has been inspiring and exciting and never boring even after so many years. It's hard to give up frequent contact



with so many wonderful people around the world. Luckily many have become also personal friends and private contacts will continue.

If I should say that what I hope for Diak's international activities in the future, there are at least the following things:

I hope that the student mobility could be raised back to the level of 2010-11. The new curriculum might have been a bit confusing for many students who plan to think of going abroad. It means that the changing organization should pay a lot of attention to international information days, information in tutorial groups, lessons of first years of studies and by study advisors. International activities should be seen in the walls of the buildings and everywhere where Diak is present.

Diak has a lot of good placements not only in Asia but elsewhere as well. It's good to advertise them bravely to students. The role of ex-students should also be at least as strong as now, maybe even stronger in inspiring and encouraging students to go. For a few years back quite a few students were interested in making their thesis in south, helping out the partner organizations. I hope that students could be encouraged to do that also in the future. Good guidelines were created already in 2005 by Anne Määttä who spent some time in Bangladesh to see how the cooperation with thesis work could be developed.

The rather new Mobility Online application system is good, but still a bit stiff and there should be some improvements in using that – I know the system is developing all the time. So far it's still a bit difficult to use it as a daily assistant for follow up work of a coordinator.

Hopefully the number of international coordinators will not be reduced, but in contrary the coordinators should have more working hours in order to serve better students, teachers and partners – and have some time also for developmental work and well as for the projects.

Hopefully Cimo will continue NSS program and rather open more and more options so that even a network like Hope could have chances to apply for new funding. Hope has not finished the job yet!

I hope that also in the future active cooperation with Asian partners will continue. There are people who have dedicated themselves among many other things to serving our students as well as possible and I think that's very valuable. The contacts need to be kept alive.

It's good to see that the work of more than ten years has carried some fruit. It's been team work, most of all. No one could have accomplished all this alone, it's demanded many people's passion, commitment and enthusiasm. I'm happy to say at this point THANK YOU to all involved in Diak's international work as well as in helping me to write this book and I wish the best for all.



APPENDICES

1 Facts about partnership in Asia

Number of exchange students in nutshell

Bangladesh (RDRS): 6 nursing students and 14 social work students in years 2001 - 2010

Hong Kong: 16-20 social work students from 1998 to 2005 and three in years 2011-2012

India: Varanasi: 50 students project between years 1996 and 2000

Iper: 60 social work students since 1996. The number includes a few nursing students who have been doing mostly teaching in preventive health care

Gurukul: 3-4 students in the beginning of 2000.

Nepal: About 50 nursing students and about 160 social work students since 2000

Vietnam: About 55 nursing students since 1999 and 24 social work students since 2008

Students in other places in Asia: 3 students in Cambodia, a few in Thailand, Mongolia and some other Asian countries, all together around 20; most of them in mission fields.

The numbers are not exact because of a change in the filing system, but they give an approximate idea of the number of students going to Asia from Diak.

Partners' email addresses

These are email addresses to Diak's existing partner institutions in Asia. This way everybody can look into their web pages and find out more about them.

Bangladesh: www.rdrsbangla.net

Hong Kong: www.migrants.net

India: www.iper-india.org

Nepal: www.earlychildhoodnepal.org

www.lnc.edu.np

www.sangasangai.org.np

www.sxc.edu.np

Vietnam: www.hueuni.edu.vn

Väliruokailu - Samankaltaisia www.huehelp.org

2 Diak theses about Asia

Theses can be found from internet <http://kirjastot.diak.fi/opinnaytepankki> if they are written before summer 2009 and after that from <http://publications.theseus.fi/>

Please, note, that those in which the title is only in English are also written in English, others included a summary in English.

Keltto Johanna 2000. Eteläintialaisen naisen arjen todellisuus peilattuna Intian historiaan ja traditioon (Sound of Silence – Everyday life of South-Indian Woman Reflected by History and Tradition of India. Diak thesis.

Mattila Tellu 2001. Projektioiskeluna toteutettu opintomatka - Intia-projektillaisten oppimiskokemuksia lukuvuosina 1996-2000 (Study trip as a project- Learning experiences during the academic years 1996-2000). Diak thesis.

Ala-Korpula Elina & Heurlin Mari 2002 Köyhä, rikas maa - Nepal, opiskelijana uudessa kulttuurissa (Poor, rich country – Nepal, as a student in a new culture). Diak thesis.

Helenius Sanna 2003. Synnytyksen aikainen ammatillinen hoitaminen vietnamilaisessa sairaalassa (Professional Nursing and the Delivery Process in a Vietnamese Hospital)

Keskinen Taru 2003. Haasteena intialaisperäinen uskonnollisuus : tutkimus yksilön syistä valita intialaisperäinen uskonnollisuus, sekä siitä kuinka kirkon koetaan kohtaavan muut uskonnot (Reasons for choosing to

- follow new, Hindu- or Buddhism-based religions in Finland and the how Finnish Church's (ELCF) interaction with other religions has been experienced). Diak thesis.
- Horstia, Kytölä, Öhman 2004. Boys in lower society - a clashing position: research about boys' attitudes towards girls and violence in Calcutta, India. Diak thesis.
- Uotila Meri 2005. The Health of Indian Street Children in the Iper Sponsorship Program. Diak thesis.
- Mattila Kati 2005. "JOS NAINEN LEPÄÄ, SAKAALI VIE KANAT" - Tyttöjen ja naisten asema Nepalissa (Gender Discrimination and Inequality: examining the situation of girls and women in Nepal). Diak thesis.
- Koski Maria & Lindstedt Marika 2006. Nepalilaisten naisten tukeminen raskauden aikana ja synnytyksen jälkeen (Supporting Nepalese women during pregnancy and after delivery). Diak Thesis.
- Kunnas Laura 2006. "Tyttöjen elämä oli minun evankeliumini" Nepalilaisten naisten kokemuksia kristinuskon vaikutuksista arkeen (Experiences of Christian Women: Impact of faith on women's life in Nepal). Diak Thesis.
- Ahola Petra & Sjöroos Magnus 2006. Tulevaisuutena päihteetön elämä. Tutkimus päihteiden käytöstä ja kuntoutuksesta Nepalissa päihderiippuvaisten kokemana (Future without drugs. Drug abuse experienced by drug addicts in Nepal). Diak thesis.
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- Laine Nita & Suonto Eveliina 2007. Luovan ilmaisun kasvuryhmä intialaisen lastenkodin lapsille (A creative growth group in an Indian children's home). Diak thesis.
- Aranki Katja & Ikonen Maria 2008. Traditiot ja uskomukset Vietnamin terveydenhuollossa (Traditions and Beliefs in Vietnamese Health Care. Diak thesis.
- Sarmaste Oliwia and Tuominen Miia 2008. Nepaliläisten kansainväliset adoptiot (Inter-Country Adoptions in Nepal). Diak thesis.
- Rantanen Anni 2008. TOWARDS EQUALITY; Women's empowerment at IPER, India. Diak. thesis.
- Buss Mia 2008. Leikkitoimintapäivän toteuttaminen kansainvälisessä opiskelijavaihdossa (Children's activity day in international student exchange). Diak thesis.
- Kurtti Tuomo & Laine Jenni 2009. Nepalilaisten sairaanhoitajaopiskelijoiden kokemuksia hoitotyön opiskelusta Nepalissa (Nepalese nurse students' experiences of studying nursing in Nepal). Diak thesis.



- Karjalainen Anu 2010. Nuorten naisten tietous seksuaaliterveydestä, seksuaalinen käyttäytyminen ja asenteet. Tutkimus Nepalin perhesuunnittelujärjestön hankkeessa (Young women and girls' knowledge, behaviour and attitude concerning sexual health. Survey in the project of Family Planning Association of Nepal). Diak thesis.
- Bhusal Manoj 2010. Does microfinance really empower? : A study on the contribution of microfinance in empowering the poor women of northern Bangladesh. Diak thesis.
- Khalil Mustafa Lawin 2010. Shadows of the Street : Documentary about Street Children of Kathmandu, Nepal. Diak thesis.
- Tuulikallio Markus 2011. Kansainvälinen opiskelu Vietnamin (International studies in Vietnam). Diak thesis.
- Joshi Sudip 2011. Community Participation & Ownership of Sanitation and Hygiene in Western Nepal. Diak thesis.

3 Abbreviations

CIMO = Centre for International Mobility

DIAK = Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (earlier Diaconia Polytechnic)

DSS = Degree program in Social Services

EAIE = European Association for International Education

FELM = Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

FCA = Finnchurchaid

HDCS = Human Development and Community Service

HOPE = Holistic Partnership in Social Work and Health Care Education

IPER = Institute of Psychological Education and Research

LNC = Lalitpur Nursing Campus

LWF = Lutheran World Federation

LWS = Lutheran World Service

MFMW = Mission for Migrant Workers

NGO = Non Governmental Organization

NSS = North South South

RDRS = Rangpar Dinapur Rural Services

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Personal communication through email:

Antonymsamy Antony Fr, email February 8th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Bijli Mallik, email 30th January 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Binh Ho Duy Dr, email March 2nd 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

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Eila Niitamo, email February 13th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Elsa Keskitalo, email February 21st 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

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Irmeli Leinos, email February 6th and 7th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Jaana Tilli, email February 8th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Joshua Zukas, email February 8th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Kari Latvus, emails February 1st and March 8th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Katja Päälylsaho, email February 27th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Kim Megson, email March 14th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Lan Duong Thingoc, email February 20th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Leena Haavisto, email February 9th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Mikko Malkavaara, email March 1st 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Phuong Ngyen Thi Anh Dr. (Email February 19th 2012.)

Radha Devi Bangdel, email February 13th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Raija Helistö, email February 5th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Raili Gothoni, email February 6th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Rajesh Shahi, email March 6th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Reanne Binnenmars, email March 4th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Rebecca Sinha, email February 8th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Riikka Hälikkä, email February 1st and March 23rd 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Riitta Pistokoski, email February 7th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

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Tuovi Leppänen, emails February 3rd and 7th 2012 to Anne Meretmaa

Voutilainen Markku & Meretmaa Anne 2001. Email discussions.

ATTACHMENTS

Presentations at Adventurous Decade – Diak’s Partnership in Asia – seminar:

Fr. Antonysamy

Dr. An

Bergman Henrik

Dr. Binh

Devi Bangdel Radha

Gothoni Raili

Leppänen Tuovi

Nuorva Vesa

Voutilainen Markku



ATTACHMENTS

Diak's seminar Adventurous Decade – Diak's Partnership in Asia seminar was held in Helsinki on 26th of April 2012.

Below is the program of the seminar and the presentations held in the seminar.

PROGRAMME

Adventurous Decade - Diak's Partnership in Asia -seminar will take place in Diak South/Helsinki at Sturenkatu 2. Invitees are Diak partners in Asia cooperation as well as present and former students who have been exchange students in Asia. Of course, also Diak's staff is warmly welcome.

Diak's Nepali students studying in Järvenpää play an important role in the program.

Asian guests are NSS Hope project partners Father Antonysamy, Father Arul and Raj Kumar Yadav from St. Xavier's Social College in Nepal, Campus Chief Mrs Radha Devi Bangdel and Mrs Mina Kumari Gurung from Lalitpur Nursing Campus in Nepal and Dr An, Dean of Nursing Faculty and Dr Binh from Hue University, College of Medicine and Pharmacy. There will also be students from these three colleges.

There will be interesting presentations and discussions as well as a cultural program from Nepal and a Playback theatre performing at the end.

13.00 Welcoming coffee
Ethnic music in the background

13.30 Welcome – Vice Rector Dr Pirjo Hakala

Introduction of participants – Ms Anne Meretmaa

14.00 Diak and Asia: How did it all start?

Introducing the theme and chairing the discussion – Ms. Anne Meretmaa
Dr Raili Gothoni, India
Dr Binh, Vietnam

Mr Markku Voutilainen, Nepal

Questions and comments by audience

Dance performance (Nepali)

Break

15.30 Partnership – what is it about? A deep analysis – Mr Henrik Bergman, FCA

Music

Partnership in Hope project and future

introducing the theme and chairing the discussion – Ms Riikka Hälikkä

Key values of partnership:

Father Antonysamy, St. Xavier's Social College, Nepal

Ms Radha Devi Bangdel, Lalitpur nursing Campus, Nepal

Dr Binh, Hue University, College of Medicine and Pharmacy,
Vietnam

Ms Tuovi Leppänen, TEC, Finland

Dr Vesa Nuorva, Centria, Finland

Questions and comments by audience

Break

17.15 Playback Theatre Group interprets the ideas and feelings coming up in the seminar

18.00 Nepali-Finnish dinner served by Diak's Nepali students
Time for sharing with friends

18.45 Closing Meditation - Father Arul and Mr Jouko Porkka



ADVENTUROUS DECADE – DIAK’S PARTNERSHIP IN ASIA

Presentations of the seminar:

WELCOME by Dr Pirjo Hakala (vice-rector of Diak)

I have the great pleasure to warmly welcome all our Asian and Finnish guests to this seminar “Adventurous decade”. I am glad that so many representatives of Diak’s Asian partner universities and colleges have been able to participate in our seminar. We are honoured to have you as our guests here in Finland. It is also delightful to see here so many of Diak’s former and current students – knowing that all of you have a special Asian place in your hearts! Warm welcome also to our Finnish partners in the Asia cooperation and to my colleagues at Diak! Anne Meretmaa, the Mother, the Heart and the Soul, of Diak’s Asia co-operation have made this seminar possible. Without your excellent and committed work throughout the years we would not be here today. Warm thanks to you, Anne! I will also warmly thank all of you who will contribute to the program today.

During the day we will have an adventurous journey filled with memories and stories from Diak’s first steps in Asia. We will also have the possibility to share our experiences and deepen our understanding of the importance of partnerships. The music and dance performances, playback theatre and Nepali-Finnish dinner will give nourishment to all our senses, and guarantee us an unforgettable day together.

Asia is one of Diak’s key areas in international activities, and there especially Nepal, Vietnam, India, Bangladesh and Hong Kong. Our aim is to give our students readiness for international and multicultural tasks, and therefore we offer our students the opportunity to complete a part of their studies abroad. According to the model and principles of our international activities, the studies or practical placement abroad should always, when possible, be connected with research and development activities together with our partners. Such an integrated model offers best possibilities for all parties to learn from one another. Together we can create something new and bring about positive change in the world and in ourselves.

We are grateful to our Asian partners that year after year you have been willing to offer our students and staff a unique opportunity to learn and experience something totally new. Also our joint projects have offered us an important platform for mutual sharing and learning. Today we have the possibility to share experiences of this partnership especially in the Hope project.

Joint projects and student and teacher exchange help us all to see the world with different eyes. A personal experience of staying in a foreign country changes your way of seeing life and your own country and culture in a very

profound way. I have myself lived two years in Asia, and had this February the possibility to return to our home city after 17 years. So much had changed; even our old home had been replaced by a new house. What struck me the most was the form of memories that rose up: it was not what I saw, but it was the mentality and the kindness of people, it was smells, the sensation of the humid warmth of the night wrapping around you like velvet, the sound of the chirping crickets, or the familiar taste of the food. These memories and flashbacks from the past made me realize how deep and all-embracing the importance of those two years had been. I am convinced that something similar has happened to you, our students, who have had the possibility to stay a small part of your life in Nepal, Vietnam or India. The deep impact of that time has left a mark in you for the rest of your lives.

My wish is that you, our Asian partners and students, would experience something similar here in Finland. Something important, that the memory of all your senses would carry as a treasure over the years to come.

CO-OPERATION WITH IPER

Dr Raili Gothóni, senior lecturer of Diak

Once there was a time when the Board of Education in Finland said that students should not study abroad for more than two weeks. Otherwise they do not learn enough from the Finnish social and healthcare systems nor about the Church in Finland. But how to learn co-operation and international responsibility, if one is very exclusive? How to learn to understand and develop practices in transforming, reconciling, and empowering international diaconal work if you stay in your own city? So we wanted to build up a strategy for international work and exchange program.

Rector Reijo Räisänen in Diaconia College of Helsinki in 1990's was the leading person for this work. International work should have two priorities: 1) Nordic countries (Ersta, Stora Sköndahl (Sweden) and Diakonihjemmet (Norway) and 2) diaconal responsibility in developing countries with projects (India, Kolkata and Brazil, Rio de Janeiro). The international activities of Diaconia College were focusing on setting up longer-term development projects and establishing student and teacher exchange programs.

At first we needed special arrangements so that a six weeks practical-period was accepted and some years later the Board of Education changed its mind and wanted the international studies to last at least three months. The story of international co-operation has continued in Diak. It has been developed a great deal since the times of Diaconia College and it is flourishing today.

The theme of today is in Finnish "kumppanuus". It can be translated with three different words: fellowship, partnership and companionship.



Fellowship means a group of people or an organization with the same purpose. Who could have had the same goals with Diaconia College of Helsinki? It was easy to take the nearest ones: Diaconess institute in Helsinki and Lutheran Church in Finland. They had same values and a task in India. Director of Lutheran World Service in Kolkata Mr Ilari Rantakari, and his wife Birgitta Rantakari helped us to find connections with Lutheran World Service and Mother Theresa's hospital.

But we needed a NGO which already existed and had a good reputation and connections with education and University. Birgitta Rantakari introduced us to The Institute of Psychological & Educational Research (IPER) and to its leaders Dr Arun Ghosh and Dr Bijli Malik. They had a similar goal: to help children in need and carry out research. Teachers and students had the same goal: learning. Students have always been a great resource in international work. At that time students of Diaconia College organized so called hunger-days, lectured about international work, and were ready to make an effort in order to be able to travel to Kolkata.

Partnership is a state of being a partner in collaboration. It was time to fill up applications to Finnida to get economic support. We needed partners, so Deaconess Institute of Helsinki, IPER and the Department of Social and Pedagogical Institute of University in Kolkata became our partners. We trusted each other. Names on paper made the partnership official. The purpose was to help children, first mentally retarded children, later on street-children and their mothers. We had four students per year at IPER. Dr Mallik took really good care of them and organized working schedules and tutoring. The students were staying with the family of Mr Kochhar. The family was not just a partner. They took good care of our students, which was safe but not always appreciated by the students, who wanted more freedom. One student called me: "In the beginning I was so happy to be with the family. They were so friendly and helpful. Now I am irritated. We are not their children and we do not need so much gardening. How shall I say it friendly or shall I just move to another place to stay."

She learned a lot about different cultures; to be a girl in India is different than to be a young woman in Finland. And she learned about making a contract. One important partner was a Bengali teacher from University of Helsinki. The students needed some knowledge of Bengali, even if they worked mainly in English. He had an intensive period of teaching Bengali for several years.

A companion is a person you spend a lot of time with because you are friends. Even if is a long way from India to Finland I have a deep feeling of companionship and friendship with Dr Mallik. Partly because of her the cultural and multicultural questions became a part of my life and my work. We

had an extremely good co-operation. I honour her devotion and wisdom.

To live near the people who are suffering, to see injustice, to experience great poverty side by side with great wealth, was not easy.

Students had a lot of questions: "Is it right, that people need to sleep on the streets? In the beginning I jumped over and tried not to disturb them. Is it right, that after some weeks, I did not see them? Is it right, that children have no food? How can they be so happy and we are so unsatisfied? How can we use so much water? We need to do something and we need to make all aware of the injustice and responsibility." Students were shocked but happy. They had gained something very valuable. They learned how important it is every now and then again and again to ask: "Who am I? What does it mean to be a human being and share this globe with all the other human beings?"

Actually I have two great ladies to thank. Because of them I am now here: Dr Mallik and Lecturer Anne Meretmaa.

I propose not a toast but a song:

For she's a jolly good fellow, for she's a jolly good fellow

For she's a jolly good fellow (pause), and so say all of us

And so say all of us, and so say all of us

For she's a jolly good fellow, for she's a jolly good fellow

For she's a jolly good fellow (pause), and so say all of us!

HOW DID HOPE START IN HUE –VIETNAM?

Dr Binh, Hue University, College of Medicine and Pharmacy

The good relationship between Finland and Vietnam has existed for a long time. So far many Vietnamese students have studied their Masters or PhD in Finnish Universities.

The Vietvoc project between Finland and Quang Tri province in Vietnam was sponsored by the Finnish government since 1997. As a part of the project both parties agreed to boost ties in education and vocational training. Many Finnish experts visited our university; Mr Kyösti Voima, Ms Pirkko Kivi and Ms Kaarina Halme were teaching nursing theory and practice, advising us and finding resources at early stages of the Hue nursing faculty. A memorandum of understanding in healthcare cooperation was developed.

In 2007 Finnish nursing students came to Hue medical University as part of the student exchange program saying that there was a Finland-Nepal project going on. In this situation the former Dean of the Hue nursing faculty, Dr Thai, contacted Ms Anne Meretmaa and introduced our situation. Being invited by Ms Anne Meretmaa Dr Thai participated in the Kathmandu work-



shop that was the beginning of the Hope project. He participated also a workshop in Finland in the autumn 2007. The Hue nursing faculty became the full member of HOPE.

Through this on-going project Ms Anne Meretmaa has been in Hue three times to kick off the project. The first network meeting took place in Hue, Vietnam, in September 2009 organized only for Vietnamese teachers and partners, some of whom participated through a Skype connection. The first intensive course for teacher and nursing students was organized in March 2010 in Hue. Since 2009 eight teachers and nine students have been able to participate in intensive courses in Nepal and teacher and student exchange in Finland.

Finally I have a chance to visit Finland as part of the teacher exchange program. It's been a long trip to Helsinki, Pieksämäki, Jyväskylä, Kokkola and Pori. This opportunity has been of great benefit academically and culturally.

I would like to emphasize the role of the students in this project. Through them we learn to know and became a member of the HOPE family.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone who has worked so hard for the successful project we have today. I would also like to recognize the dedication of the staff of DIAK, Ms Riikka Hälikkä and Suvi Äärilä, to Tuovi Leppänen and especially Ms. Anne Meretmaa: We will always memorize her merit for the Vietnamese community.

ADVENTUROUS DECADE OF DIAK IN NEPAL

Mr Markku Voutilainen, former missionary of Felm to Nepal (1979 – 2011)

Congratulations to DIAK, its personnel and students for celebration of 'Adventurous decade in Nepal'!

Even though my personal involvement has been little and only occasional, I appreciate that my wife and I were invited here. We are happy to celebrate your successes and joy of the student placement programme in Nepal.

Ms Anne Meretmaa contacted me when I was working as a missionary with the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) for the United Mission to Nepal (UMN). When we met in Kathmandu in the beginning of June 2000, she told about DIAK's plan to start a student exchange program in Nepal. She was looking for suitable placements and arrangements for accommodations, etc. I had some experience with dealing with volunteers/students who had come to Nepal through FELM. My own field was rural community development; therefore I had only some links but was not very good with the social sector.

We visited also United Mission to Nepal which already had a functioning student placement program for foreign students. As the program was mainly for medical students and due to other reasons, it was not suitable for the need of DIAK. I also understood that DIAK wanted to start its own programme. Besides DIAK some other Polytechnics from Finland had their own links and student placements with a few Nepalese education institutes. As Anne had made the first links and arrangements for student placement on her own, there was an understanding that my wife and I would serve as contacts when needed. Soon thereafter, in May 2001, we left Nepal for a nearly one year furlough in Finland.

As DIAK's programme was going to grow and we did not believe a partial work assignment with FELM would be a possibility and it would be 'too much' as free time voluntary work, the solution was to find a Nepalese person to help with the programme management in Nepal. Ms Esther Thapa, after her and her husband's FELM scholarship-based studies in Hong Kong, had not yet found 'full time' work in Nepal, so she came to my mind as a suitable person for the need. I introduced her to Anne; I also tried to explain about DIAK and the student exchange programme to Esther. When they both agreed, Esther started her role as programme coordinator in Nepal.

Esther hoped that her link with DIAK would be direct. However, according to the administration of DIAK the cooperation had to be through an organization. The Human Development and Community Services (HDCS) was a registered organization. It also had an agreement with the Social Welfare Council (a government body that monitors/controls the work of organizations) for project work and receiving foreign money – so it seemed to be an appropriate organization. It was also easier as Ester's husband, Tirtha Thapa, was the director of HDCS and I had recently (February 2002) started to work with the organization. I drafted 'An Agreement between DIAK and HDCS on services of Ms Esther Thapa on Practical Training of DIAK students in Nepal'. The agreement described the tasks and responsibilities of the Link Organization / person, Practical Training Places, Students and Supervising teachers of DIAK as well as compensation and honorarium.

Esther had no earlier experience with such tasks. She was a little bit scared, but having earlier experience with Finnish people, and being a woman who wants to face challenges, she started her work. In the beginning I and other FELM personnel gave suggestions and advice on what to do, e.g., how to orient students to a Nepalese environment and living, how to deal with the Finnish youth, the arrangement of housing, care of sickness, making contacts with practical placements, travel and visa. Esther started the arrangements for housing and placements with the persons she already knew, mainly friends. Many students were accommodated in her home. Soon she started to

expand her network. Even with some difficulties, Esther made good efforts and was successful in building new relationships. In the beginning, the organizations did not know DIAK and generally were less aware about the practical training of students (in my understanding, nowadays foreign students are well wanted in various organizations and educational institutions).

The first groups for Esther were to learn better communication in English (e.g. to understand the difference in pronunciation and meaning of words), to understand behaviours of people who come from Finnish culture, to help the students to learn Nepalese culture and living, to learn how to act when students get sick or when they need other's care, to arrange travelling/holidays and so on. I think that in the beginning Esther had some difficulties finding the balance between the roles of an official link person/tutor and a foster mother. Soon her task grew to be a full time job. My understanding is that she has managed very well.

The students' health and mental care when they get sick has been one of the most challenging and also most scary tasks for Esther. It is common that during the first week of their arrival, the students are amazed to see and taste various spices and food. From the second week most of them start falling sick with diarrhoea and vomiting; sometimes they get a high fever or have food poisoning. Difficult times have been those when all of them fall sick at same time in her home and in the guest house. Many start crying and missing their close ones. These situations: meeting/talking with students, taking them to the hospital, being available for 24 hours, cooking soft food for those who are a little sick with own house work and other responsibilities, Esther recalls as the hardest times to manage. She has enjoyed with students e.g. when cooking together. Many of them became her good friends and with some they continue to communicate and share their feelings.

Even though Esther had the experience of living in Hong Kong and had also visited Finland, in those places, as well as in the Nepalese context, she had been in an environment where Christian values and ethics were dominant and followed. She was aware that the students came from the Christian college. Soon she found that all students did not behave as she would expect the Christian youths to act: e.g. many are not interested in going to church, some smoke and drink beer. She also learned that Finnish youths are more independent and require freedom to be responsible for their being and doing in comparison with Nepalese ones. Now, after ten years Esther says: 'I feel that all the young people are same around the world whether they are from west or east' – she has more experiences with youths, including her own daughters who had studied abroad. Also a lot of changes have happened among the Nepalese people.



For most of the DIAK students, Nepal is the first undeveloped country they have visited, and they find it 'very different' from Finland. Many things surprise them and also stimulate their thinking; e.g. poverty, happiness of children, cultural and natural diversity and political instability.

After the beginning my links with the programme and the students were only occasional. My wife Riitta-Leena used to inform Esther about the evenings of Finnish Bible study and I used to take the students who attended back to their guesthouse by car. The students have written in our guestbook that they enjoyed the 'Finnish pulla' and discussions. Some students made contacts and met with other missionaries (e.g. Kirsti Kirjavainen and Raija Kiljunen).

Personally I emphasize that along with the education related practical training it is good to get overall experiences and an understanding of people, country, culture, etc. I have understood that the student exchange of DIAK has fulfilled and succeeded in its purpose.

I wish all the best for DIAK and its programs in the coming years.

PARTNERSHIP – WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Mr Henrik Bergman, FCA

Partnership in development work

Partnership can be understood in various ways, depending on the context and our personal experience. This short discussion reflects partnership from a development cooperation perspective. Partnership can be understood technically as a joint business between two parties. A deeper analysis shows that it is also a question of relationships between two or more individuals, groups, organizations, countries or networks involved in an activity together.

Understanding partnership and its dimensions is a fundamental requirement for successful development cooperation. Depending on what kind of organization we represent and with whom we are hoping to cooperate with, give partnership different rules. A small NGO can relatively easily work together with a similar organization, but if we want to enter into a working relationship with a bigger or global NGO, network or governmental body, we enter into new areas of partnership rules. Moreover, many intergovernmental bodies dealing with development work have their own policies and standards for partnership, which NGOs have to follow.

Fruitful partnership forces us to define according to which principles, policies and practices we ourselves are willing and able to cooperate with other organizations. We have to define partnership criteria for our operations,



according to which we are willing to enter into a partnership with potential organizations. There might also turn out to be a need for capacity building either for our partner organization or for ourselves in order to secure successful operations.

All this needs resources. It is helpful to assess already before entering into a partner relationship, what we are willing and able to do. In development cooperation NGOs usually enter into a partnership in order to carry out a joint task. This relationship should reflect equal partnership, mutual respect, intensive and careful listening and appreciation of both parties. It is walking together for a common purpose with defined responsibilities and activities for both partners, where the responsibility for the implementation of the work stays with the local partner.

This kind of relationship also means that we must be ready to discuss and evaluate together the attitudes and values we consider self-evident. This can lead us into a painful process of replacing our familiar, deep rooted values, behaviour and attitudes with new ones, more suitable for international cooperation.

A complete partnership is difficult to achieve in international interaction and it is wise and helpful to admit it. This does not, however, mean we should not strive towards it by all means we have at hand.

Four dimensions of partnership

In development cooperation we can identify four dimensions, which are helpful in understanding partnership in international cooperation. The dimensions can be defined as: Values, Rules for cooperation, Joint operations and Genuine interaction.

Values

Basic values for fruitful cooperation are the equality of both organizations and mutual respect. Partners should be able to show mutual trust, be transparent and honest in their operations and behaviour. A democratic decision making practice and the participation of people involved in the project are also important.

Rules for cooperation

Partnership usually leads into a long-term working relationship, which helps the partners to learn to know each other and how to work together. In fruitful cooperation both parties participate actively, according to their defined roles, in the work and are responsible for the operations. They also show a joint ownership and commitment to carry out the task, although they both have different, well defined practical responsibilities. The cooperation should

always result in a sustainable outcome and have continuity.

Joint operations

Before entering into project execution, it is important to plan jointly the work and define its goals. Equally important is to decide on the participation and responsibilities of each partner and individual. It is often helpful to compile and sign a Cooperation agreement, where the rights and responsibilities of each partner are defined.

In order to be sustainable, relevant and sensible, the initiative for the project should come from the Southern partner. Respect for local working conditions and culture cannot be emphasized too much. Many good intentions have turned out to have no or little effect on the wellbeing of the local people or have been disastrous to them, if the intentions don't pay enough attention to the local context and culture.

Genuine interaction

In order to enter into a genuine interaction, it is important to know your partner as well as possible. This can be reached through effective communication in both directions and by reserving enough time for mutual interaction. This includes creating and nurturing a culture where it is possible to discuss also difficult issues. This requires cultural sensitivity, as criticism must always be expressed appropriately in each culture.

Summary

In ideal partnership the partners in the South and North plan and agree together on the goal, implementation and evaluation of the project. Both parties have equal responsibilities and possibilities to influence the work. In development cooperation the Southern partner should ultimately be able to carry on with the work and operate independently in the future. In order to reach this, capacity building is most often needed. This helps to build up the self-respect and self-esteem of the partner, which is a prerequisite for independent behavior. Establishing a good partnership takes time and is hard work. This is helpful to realize, but should not intimidate us from struggling towards it.

Finally it is helpful to demystify partnership. It can be discussed academically and theoretically, which should not be distracting us from its real essence. Partnership and its rules is a question of human relationships and can be practiced in everyday life. The Golden Rule: Treat your partner as you would like yourself to be treated, is a good guide to effective and fruitful partnership.



INTRODUCTION TO PANEL DISCUSSION

Ms Riikka Hälikk, Head of International Relations, Diak

Hope stands for “Holistic partnership in Social Work and Health Care Education”. Since 2007, Hope project has essentially shaped the way we think about the international partnerships in Diak. From the beginning, the personal commitment of the Finnish, Nepalese and Vietnamese colleagues, some of them present here today, was the key element in the partnership building. The commitment of the organizations involved developed a little later on, but I’m happy to say there today clearly is a mutual understanding of the importance of the cooperation.

Cooperation needs tools. It needs funds. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland launched the then called North South programme in 2004. It is a mobility programme for student and staff mobility and joint intensive courses. The intensive courses funded within the programme framework have served as a tool for joint curriculum development and even for small scale research activities. The cooperation to Nepal and Vietnam became eligible in the programme in 2007, when Hope cooperation was already planned and ready for implementation. The North South programme was further refined to become the North South South programme, which emphasizes the cooperation between the Southern partners. I will let the panellists comment on this South-South dimension, but in my opinion the development of the South South cooperation has been one of the success stories of Hope.

The Hope project and the other North South South cooperation projects have offered valuable input to Diak’s international strategy. In the international strategy of Diak it is mentioned that Diak aims to develop long-term partnerships with organizations. We aim to develop multidimensional cooperation, which covers, for example, not only student mobility, but also curriculum development and development projects. Global responsibility and global action and cooperation with the Global South are the themes which have become central in our strategic thinking. In the past years, we have also become recognized as experts in the North South South and other development programs, and are actively taking part in shaping the role the Finnish higher education institutions have in the execution of the Finnish development policy.

How do I see the future of the Hope cooperation? Firstly, we are determined to carry on. We are expecting some changes in the tools, that is, in the funding instruments by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, the EU programs will offer us new opportunities to deepen the cooperation in Asia.

We have reached a good level of trust and commitment between our higher education institutions, found good practices and models of coope-

ration and joint learning which we can disseminate further in our countries and internationally.

Now let me invite my Hope colleagues to give their comment on the Hope cooperation, present and future. After that I'm opening the floor for question and comments by the audience.

THE ROLE OF HOPE IN MY NURSING FACULTY

Dr An, Dean of Nursing Faculty, Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy

The first reward we have gained from the HOPE project is the knowing and understanding our partners in this project. Many of Diak's partners have been part of the project for many years; however some are very new and have had no contact with others.

In this era of globalization each national culture is very diverse. We have been able to engage in an exchange program whereby Vietnamese teachers and students have had the opportunities to visit and study in Nepal and Finland and have benefited greatly from these opportunities. This has enabled us to enhance our capacity and the Vietnamese community has also benefited from this by receiving qualified health services. This sharing concerns all partner countries and serves as a very useful orientation also for the new exchanges.

In conjunction with the exchange program short teaching/training missions and intensive overseas programs have aided increasing the skills of university teaching staff, in particular, the young faculty of teachers and administrators. Through this on-going project we have been able to develop and improve our curriculum, increase the skills of our teachers and undertake research projects. In some of the areas we have been able to increase our knowledge on nursing professionalism, social work, teaching methods, communication skills, culture and language.

A great value of the partnership with Diak University has been the opportunity for our students and teachers to visit Finland and attend the University for three months and three weeks respectively. It has been an invaluable experience to attend the yearly conference held by the Hope countries. These opportunities have been of great benefit academically and culturally. Time and funds are always difficult to deal with in such cooperation. How we can maintain the activities after the ending of the project and cooperation still is our great concern.

We highly appreciate Mrs Anne Meretmaa and her colleagues in Diak for their efforts within the HOPE Project activities. If possible, we would like to keep this cooperation existing for a longer time. We also would like to ex-

pand the activities such as: have Finnish teachers doing teaching in Hue, conduct cooperative research, hold continuing medical education class, etc.

In closing, I would like to thank the Finnish Government for their on-going support of the HOPE project. I would also like to recognize the dedication of the staff of Diak University, especially Ms Anne Meretmaa. We memorize whatever she has done for this project.

Thank you!

THE IMPACT OF HOPE IN ST. XAVIER'S SOCIAL COLLEGE

Fr Antonysamy, principal of St. Xavier's College

The impact is great as a whole in three areas: 1. motivation, 2. cultural change and 3. academic achievement.

1. Motivation

There is change in the mind-set of the students in every aspect possible. Generally the students in Nepal are introvert, they do not come out that easily and it takes time for them to come out of it. After the Hope project has come to existence it is felt that students in St. Xavier's feel that they are like any others in the world and so they take things as they come and face it boldly. There is also the sense of going higher in life as they feel they have to achieve and they work towards it without minding the difficulties. In short: there is a sense of purpose in whatever they do and they go ahead till they achieve it.

2. Cultural Change

Because of the students' intensive course and exchange program the students of Nepal are able to appreciate the cultural values of their own and of others. They respect every culture and try to project the good things from their own and try to take in the good things from others. This has created a psychological change and balanced the way of looking at different cultures. Because of this they always look for new opportunities. They easily come forward to take up the leadership roles in what they do.

3. Academic Achievements

There is a tremendous change in the academic work. In general in Nepal the students do not go for analytical synthesis because they are used to reproduce what they have studied in the book or class room. But after the introduction of the Hope project there is a change in their way of wiring the knowledge. They always try to question and find answers and try to synthesize. It is a welcome change.

The change in the minds of the staff is great. The teaching methods have been changed. There is a definite goal in what they do. The approach to classroom teaching has changed a lot and more and more research methods are introduced.

I have given an example of a few of the things that I have seen as administrator and there are many more things I can state maybe during the talk and in the questions - answers session I can clarify many things.

KEY VALUE OF PARTNERSHIP

Ms Radha Devi Bangdel, Campus Chief of Lalitpur Nursing Campus

Lalitpur Nursing Campus (LNC) is a partner of Diak since 2002 as well as with the Hope project since 2007. LNC is actively participating in all the activities of North South South, Hope Project.

Following are the values of partnership with Diak relating to the Hope Project:

- For me, one of the key values is the most valuable friendship beyond partnership relating to the Hope Project, nationally and internationally.
- It is exposing me personally and professionally towards a global standard.
- To me it is a close relationship between developed and developing countries such as our team Finland, Vietnam and Nepal.
- A platform for self-development in terms of nursing and education.

- For LNC one of the main values of this partnership is national and international identity.
- It is strengthening the faculty's capacities with teachers' internship training.
- This is a wonderful opportunity of student and teacher exchange program.
- Moreover one of the key values of this partnership for LNC is developing nursing profession and education towards the international standard.



HOPE – PROJECT AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Ms Tuovi Leppänen, senior lecturer, Teacher Education College, Jyväskylä

The cooperation in the HOPE project is very much connected to my work in both institutions, earlier in Diak and nowadays in Jamk University of Applied Sciences – Teacher Education College (JAMK - TEC). It was not difficult to connect HOPE cooperation into my work, when I started in TEC 2007. This institution was also interested in and experienced in working with these kinds of projects. Asian countries, especially Vietnam was familiar to my new colleagues and they had a positive attitude towards the cooperation from the very beginning. Nepal as a new partner country was warmly welcomed in TEC.

During the first network meeting in Kathmandu we looked for core questions concerning teacher training in HOPE. The pedagogical side was of great interest to all partners in a very positive way. For Teacher Education College this was very important in the long run. Over the years we have had many partnerships, which have taught us to be humble. Learning seems to be a simple activity, but if you really like to learn something new, you need to go out and you need to be open-minded. You need to meet people who show you who you are and what you are doing.

We have learnt through HOPE for example that Finnish teacher education system is unique in the world. We have lots of resources and our everyday life is full of different kinds of technical equipment. Our students have met exchange teachers every time Nepalese and Vietnamese colleagues have been in Finland. Just last week we had a discussion with our teacher students about the question what is important in teachers' international work. One common point was obvious: learning is a global need and without the learning processes we are lost in our society. Education is a key word in the developing processes all over the world. We also had a very lively discussion about how differently we implement teaching.

I would like to say that the value of the HOPE project for TEC has been multiple. It has enriched our international cooperation a lot. It has opened new doors to Asian cultures and people. It has given unique opportunities to share learning and teaching experiences between Asia and Finland. It has taught us to do cooperation with three Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland. This has been like an institutional value.

In addition to all of this, the most valuable thing has been to get to know all these people in Nepal, Vietnam and Finland. Without every single person who has been part of this process this could not have been what it has been. We have learnt through people, not through institutions, not through the project, but through the people. When I stepped into Father's Office in St. Xavier's I started immediately to tell him how I have thought to implement

teachers' intensive course. One glance at father's eyes taught me a lot about myself and my culture. This is why it is so important to work together with different people in different countries, in order to learn from others, learn about others and learn about ourselves.

Thank you!

CENTRIA'S ROLE IN HOPE PROJECT

Dr Vesa Nuorva, Principal Lecturer

I come from Centria University of Applied Sciences which is situated in the northern part of Finland and is a multi-scientific university. My Department is Humanities and Education, and my degree program is civic activities and youth work. We educate community pedagogues. Most of them are working as youth workers in Lutheran parishes and many of them in child welfare work.

We have about twenty beginning students per year. As a little academic degree program we have not very many possibilities for variable international activities as our own contribution. Consequently co-operation with other universities and co-operative international projects like the HOPE-project have opened us a door to the world of multiculturalism and internationalization. We have a very nice history how our Asia-co-operation began.

In spring 2006 a newly married student couple contacted me and asked if I could organize for them a possibility to go to India in order to do a working placement there. They showed me Internet-sites of the Christian charity organizations working in India. I tried to explain to them that it could be a risk to join some unknown organization that wants voluntary workers and promises interesting working placement, and it is not sure if that kind of organizations could make an agreement with us.

I asked if it were better that they would go to Europe or America to some working placement where we have established relations. But the young couple did not give up. They had a vision to go to India. So I began to browse Internet pages of other universities applied of sciences if someone could have agreements to India and readiness for co-operation with us. On the pages of Diak I found a name Anne Meretmaa. The lady I remember from Finnchurcho after many years when I worked as a parish minister in Turku. Now she was in Diak. I contacted Anne and it was a surprise: Diak could send two of our students to India because very many students of Diak were eager to go to Nepal and Diak had free seats on the plane to India.

The next question was how to organize the training for going to India. Centria had not expertise of Asian developing countries. Without Anne's

know-how, flexibility and willingness to co-operate we could not have managed to begin working-placements in Asia. Until now we have sent 10 students to Asia: five to India and five to Nepal. In the autumn 2006 we met forthcoming Nepalese partners and that conference is the beginning of the Hope project in our remembrance.

Asia co-operation with Diak and especially the HOPE-project have meant to us in Centria a widening of international perspectives. As a teacher of humanities and education I think that in the name of the HOPE-project the key word is the first word: Holistic. Multiculturalism is the word of this day but we want to remember that we work above all with human beings, and a human being is a holistic wholeness.

As human beings we have a head - that means rationality. We have a will or volition – that means moral and ethics. We have a heart – that means emotions. And we have hands and legs – that means action. Despite of different cultures we are basically similar people. We need food, drink, clothes, working, spirituality and friendship of other people. Sometimes I have asked our students that have studied and practiced in India and Nepal, what was the most remarkable memory of their Asian period. And every time they have answered: friendliness and friendship. The genuine holistic partnership is friendship.

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In the series, scientific studies yielding new and innovative knowledge are published in the fields of teaching, research and development of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. The publications are, for the most part, doctoral dissertations, high-quality collections of articles, and licentiate theses, the publication of which in the A series is endorsed by a researcher with a PhD. In addition to the outside PhD referee, the licentiate thesis to be published in the A series is read by a reader with a PhD, who is a member of the publication committee. For consideration in the series, employees of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences as well as outside writers can submit publications.

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