

Nepal Gramin Ghumti Guru Project

(Mobile Village Teacher)

Stories from the Field June 4-6, 2007

Note: A team from Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church (Alpharetta, GA) (Jim Coneys, Curt Massey, and Scott Rayburn), Rock Bridge Community Church (Dalton, GA) (Chris Massey) and T4Global (Pete McLain) visited Nepal in early June, 2007. These stories came from three days of meetings in Jiri and in two villages that could only be reached by a half day's walk from the nearest paved road. The project distributed 465 MT4 players with two dramatized content chips (health and Bible) in five remote Himalayan region districts: Dolakha, Ramechhap, Solukhumbu, Okhaldhunga, and Sindhupalchok. Himalayan United Christian Fellowship (HUCF), a network of 115 churches in the region, provided 18 distributors and facilitated the distribution of the MT4 players.

- Malima Tamang, a distributor of the MT4 players from Solukhumbu, had walked three days to get to the meeting in Jiri. She explained how she and others have been trying to reach an unreached people group call the Kulung Rai people. This group has been very resistant to the gospel. They had shown them the Jesus film, but it was not well received. Then she brought the MT4 device and played the health chip first. Many Kulung Rai were very interested in the content and wanted to listen to more. So they listened to the Bible chip. As a result, they wanted to learn more about Jesus. The Bible chip dramatized Jesus healing the sick. They also remembered the same miracles in the Jesus film. It happens that there was a very sick woman in the community. They invited a team of six Christians to come and pray for her. She was healed! A family of six (including the sick woman) accepted Jesus as their Savior and were baptized. Malima thinks that these are the first ever of the Kulung Rai to believe in Jesus. The Kulung Rai are a very religious people (animists and ancestral worship) with lots of religious artifacts. The family asked the Christian workers to help them throw the artifacts away. (Note: a sketchy online people group profile for the Kulung Rai suggests that there are 27 known believers among the approximately 40,000 Kulung Rai. They live in different districts in Nepal, so this family may not be the first ever, but they are the first in the Solukhumbu district).
- Malima told of another unreached group call the Nachering Rai. She mentioned a husband and wife that had come to faith. The husband's parents were the first converts from that people group. The parents had tried to share the gospel with them many times with no effect. The MT4 health and Bible chips opened the door for them to believe in Jesus. Malima thinks that there are very few believers (perhaps only these four) among the Nachering Rai. This husband was also sick. After listening to the health chip, he thought that he might have tuberculosis. He traveled to a hospital in Kathmandu where the diagnosis was confirmed. He is now receiving treatment and plans to be baptized when he returns to the village. He made a small donation to the local church as an expression of his appreciation for what they had done to save his life- both spiritually and physically. (Note: there is no data available on Christians among the Nachering Rai people group).
- Another distributor from Ramechhap district reported that he, too, had traveled for three days by foot to get to Jiri. He said that the dramatized stories were very effective on both chips. In his district, a female healthcare worker described the health chip as being better than the training she received in her government training program for healthcare workers.

- Some of the MT4 players were distributed in a Tamang region where people used to beat Christians. The health chip gave the pastors an opportunity to present Christ in a different way. It completely changed the view of many Tamang people towards Christians. They now see Christians as people who “do good works”. Four people from different families have now become Christians.
- The Eastern Gurung people group also live in Ramechhap district and some listened to the chips. A husband and wife came to faith in Christ as a result of the project. (Note: the only known data for the Gurung people suggests that only 16 are Christian out of approximately 80,000. There are now 18.)
- The next report came from the Dolakha district. The distributor explained that it has always been difficult to preach Christ in that area up until now. “But with the MT4 device it is much easier now. In the past, there were no tools to facilitate ministry. The MT4 device is very helpful. The Bible chip clarified the teachings of Jesus. Before we had the Bible chip many were confused about what the Bible says. Those who have listened to the Bible chip now have a much better understanding. Also before bringing the MT4 players, many in the district were unfavorable towards Christians. They were afraid of Christians, thinking they were bad and only interested in preaching their beliefs. Now people have a favorable view towards Christians because they see the good works of health awareness for the rural people. Many people who used to oppose Christians have come forward and apologized and asked for forgiveness.”



A listening group in Dolakha district

- As a result of the MT4 programs distributed in Dolakha district, this distributor was aware of six people had to come to faith - four had been open to the gospel before, but two had persecuted Christians in the past. On May 31, the six were baptized.
- There was a Maoist group of 5-6 that first said “no” to listening to the MT4 players when they heard that it was from the Christians. They actually tried to run them out of the community. But the pastor explained that the health chip was good for the people. So they agreed to listen. They really liked it and listened to it several times. They also listened to the Bible chip and liked it as well. They wanted more devices to use in their area, but the pastor didn’t have any more to give out.

- In the town of Hava in the Dolakha district, a school headmaster came to faith after listening to the Bible chip. His name is Megh Raj KC. He was formerly an atheist and opposed Christianity. He now attends a local church in Dolakha.
- One distributor has a friend in the Army (a believer) who wanted to take a device back to his army camp so that others could listen. The worker was hesitant because the camp was far away, outside the specified 5 districts of the project. But she let him take it anyway. Many in the camp listened to the health chip and Bible chips and really liked both of them. They are demanding that someone come in person to explain more about the training (both health *and* Bible). The problem is that the camp is in another district and none of the Himalayan United Christian Fellowship pastors travel there.
- What was particularly interesting to hear was the role of the health chip in the process. Report after report spoke of how important the health chip was to paving the way for the Bible chip. It also helped raise the profile of the church in the community. Many people who used to oppose Christians have come forward and apologized and asked for forgiveness for treating them badly in the past. Now people have a favorable view towards Christians. We asked the pastors and distributors about the value of the health chip. 100% said that they absolutely want both chips. **Time and time again they said that if they only had the Bible chip, the project would not have gone nearly as well.**
- An 8-month old baby boy named Eliya had become very sick and was near death. The young parents were in despair. The father was crying when the pastor came to visit them. The pastor had just finished listening to the health chip and, after observing the baby, diagnosed that it was pneumonia. He had learned the symptoms from the audio programs. He said that they immediately needed to take boy to the hospital. When they arrived, the doctors confirmed that it was pneumonia and said that the child would not have survived another day. They gave the baby some shots and he fully recovered.



A smiling and healthy Eliya one month later

- A woman explained that she learned about immunization for the first time. Since listening to the programs, she has gotten her children immunized and is telling other mothers about its importance.

- A Sherpa man heard about the MT4 programs and opposed it because of the Christian content. He planned to report them to the government and tried to get the program stopped. At that time, his wife got very sick. She started throwing up blood. She went to the local health post and the hospital in Kathmandu, but they could not diagnose or treat her. She was sent back home to die because there wasn't enough money for further treatment. The Sherpa called the Christian leaders to come and pray. After fasting, the leader went to the home. He read some scriptures, laid hands on the wife, and prayed. She was completely healed! The Sherpa's daughter also got very sick a week later. The pastor came again and prayed, and the daughter was also completely healed. The Sherpa decided to learn more about Christianity. First, he listened to the health chip and then he listened to the Bible chip. He committed his life to Jesus 10 days ago! The wife and daughter also became Christians. His wife has already been baptized and he wants to be baptized soon.
- A 65-year old Sherpa woman was very depressed because her Buddhist son was not taking care of her. She started listening to the health chip and then the Bible chip. She found encouragement and hope. She came to know that even if no one cares for her, God certainly cared and loves her. She became a believer about 2 months ago. At midnight on May 31st, she called some of the Christian women to her home. She was very ill from diarrhea and was extremely dehydrated. The practice in that village (and throughout most of the Himalayan region) is to eat solid food and to *NOT* drink water - they think water makes the diarrhea symptoms worse. Because the women had learned the importance of drinking fluids from the health chip, they encouraged her to drink some water. They then carried her to the nearby health post so that she could receive re-hydration salts and fluids (as instructed on the health chip). Today she is completely back to normal. They said that her life was saved - she would have surely died from dehydration without proper treatment. The health chip has completely changed the way this community treats diarrhea.



Four HUCF leaders: Dinesh, Gian, Lok and Shakti with Pete McLain

- Four women came to the church to meet with us even though they themselves were not Christians. One woman explained how useful the health chip was to her. She was a community healthcare worker and met with 90 women in small groups twice a month. She said that all 90 had listened to the entire health chip. She

also said that she learned more from the health chip than she had learned in her government training. When asked how many times she had listened to the content, she laughed and said she didn't know how many times - she had lost count! The device empowered her to talk to other women about many issues. She said that it had changed her life and the lives of other women in the community. She said that the village used to have "mostly dirty places, but now the village was clean". Before the arrival of the MT4 devices, most people went to the local shaman (witch doctor) when they or a family member was sick. Now they no longer go the shaman for help. In fact, we later heard from the HUCF leaders that many shamans in the areas where the devices were distributed have started to complain that no one comes to them anymore.

- We asked her if she had also listened to the Bible chip. She said that she had and that she really enjoyed it. She learned the stories of Jesus for the first time. She had come to church a few times, but didn't know any of the stories of Jesus. She said that she was really moved by the story of the council condemning Jesus to death as well as the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.
- Another one of these women was also a government healthcare worker and met regularly with 60 women. They had also listened to the entire health chip. She added that many of her women were learning about HIV/AIDS, malaria, and TB for the first time. She also said that no one had died in her village since the MT4 players arrived. "Before the chip, it was very common for at least one person to die every month, usually from preventable diseases. Many suffered from diarrhea and were not treating the symptoms with fluids. Now *everyone* knows how to avoid dehydration. People are now implementing prevention practices that are eliminating many sicknesses from even occurring. They also are diagnosing diseases early and seeking out treatments before getting too sick."



Pastor Gian's wife (center) with several health care workers

- In Okhaldhunga district, there is an army barrack where almost 1,100 soldiers live and train. A distributor placed some MT4 players in the barracks. Many of the soldiers listened to both the health and Bible chips, responding quite positively. The Army Chief then called one of our distributors and thanked him for the players, especially for the health chip. The Chief also listened to several songs and dramas found on the Bible chip, and was encouraged. He allowed our distributors

and other local church leaders to have a gospel concert inside the army camp - an impossibility a few months ago. The impact of this initiative is still unfolding.

- Pastor Dinesh, one of the HUCF leaders, described the work in his village, known as Bhuji. It is a 1½ days' walk from Jiri. He mentioned that 2 people had become Christians in his village as a result of listening to the MT4 contents. One had listened to the health chip first and liked it so much that he listened to the Bible chip as well. He then listened to the Bible chip four more times through in its entirety. He then knew more about the Bible than most of the Christians in his village! He approached Pastor Dinesh's assistant pastor and said that he was worshipping the wrong god and wanted to become a Christian.
- Pastor Dinesh also described the work in another village called Manthali, a 2 days' walk from Jiri. After listening to the health and Bible chips, eighteen people there had come to faith in Jesus, four families of four as well as two individuals. One of the individuals had a history of drug abuse. He had gone to a Buddhist monastery to find tranquility and sell drugs, but had beaten a priest and fled to Manthali. Pastor Lok had found him unresponsive to the gospel. He is now a believer, drug-free, attending church and witnessing to others.
- The health component of the project is being independently evaluated by Professor Bipin Acharya. He works in the Department of Sociology/Anthropology at Tribhuvan University located in Kathmandu. Bipin's report is due the end of June, but he gave a preliminary report of his survey results indicating that the project had gone very well. Interestingly, Bipin is Hindu. He said that before the project, he had a negative view of Christians. He thought all Nepalese Christians converted to get Western money. After seeing the HUCF pastors at work, however, his opinion had changed. He now saw that Christians really cared for the poor and needy, were willing to serve the people, and were not doing it for financial gain.
- All together, the HUCF leadership had heard of at least 80 conversions since all the devices were completely distributed 3 1/2 months ago. They fully expected the number to double or triple once the reports came in from the most remote villages (some are 6-10 days' walk away).
- The HUCF leadership is keen on expanding the project. They are asking for 10,000 more devices for the five districts. They said that the number of new converts and eventually new churches was only limited by the number of devices they distributed. Pastor Gyan spoke of his vision to see a church planted in every village in the Himalayan region. He wants to see every village changed for the better. He has a solidly holistic view of the Kingdom of God. The dynamics among the four HUCF leaders is incredible. They are a tight team bonded in unity and purpose, without personal ambition or egos. They also have an incredible passion for loving and helping their people. Their names: Gyan, Dinesh, Lok and Shakti. Shakti used to be a regional commander for the Maoist rebels before coming to faith in Jesus about 5 years ago. We affectionately called these four men "mountain goats" because of their incredible trekking skills. They are spreading the gospel throughout the Himalayas. What a privilege to be working with these saints.

MT4 Listening Groups



Focus Group Interview Gatherings



Village Church on Mountain and Views from Church

