

## PAN Localization Stories of Change

### Nepal

#### Amar Bahadur BK, Grade VII, Himalaya Milan School, Tangting

It was past 10 in the morning, and our 4<sup>th</sup> visit to Tangting. The weather was great, Annapurna II and the Lamjung mountains were glistening majestically under the soft winter sun. We had disembarked from the bus and just started walking towards Tangting village, the project site. We received a 'Namaste' from a boy with his *Doko* (a basket made from bamboo stem, used to carry loads on the back, harnessed on the carrier's forehead with a belt made from local rattan fibres), bare feet exposed through the slippers in the cold of January. By now our team not only knows the route well enough, but we have also become fairly known by the people of Tangting, as *Gura* (teacher in Gurung) that teach computers. More often than not, the few people we meet on our 4-hour hike happen to be those we know personally, so exchange of Namastes and *sanchai hunuhunchha?* "How do you do?" is a fairly routine conversation in our journey. But it was a more personal greeting, for the boy was Amar BK, a 14-year-old Dalit student studying in Grade Seven at the Himalaya Milan School (HMS). To be more precise he was one of our own students, whom we had taught the basics of the computer a month ago.

We asked where he was headed with a *Doko*, after all it was a school day. With a little reluctance he replied that he had come down to carry the baggage of some the visitors who were on their way to Tangting. Though it must not have been a pleasant thing for him to bunk classes and do the job of a porter, while his other friends were learning new things in the school, from his resigned demeanour we could see that it was a routine affair for him.

After we had climbed more than half of the way, a powerful hailstorm forced us to take shelter at a *Dharmashala*, a small shed built to provide temporary shelter in village routes. The storm was strong enough to render our raincoats and umbrellas of little use. We had been waiting for an hour for the storm to abate when we again saw Amar, this time his *Doko* was full of baggage, and despite the storm, fully drenched, he was carrying on towards the village. He gave us a sheepish smile when he saw us sheltering from the rain. While it had rained in Tangting, the surrounding hills in the higher altitude had received considerable snowfall. That evening in the village, computer classes for the evening had to be cancelled due to the inclement weather, but we again met Amar, at the porch of a nicely built village house of Mrs Karna Gurung, senior CMA at the local health post, and one of our students from the community at our computer class. Mrs Gurung had invited us for a gathering, and Amar looking haggard, had rushed there to take her to his house some 15-min climb further up in the village as his sister-in-law was in labour pain.

#### Initial Survey

- Name: Amar Bahadur BK
- Age: 13 years

- Class Ranking: Nine
- Ethnicity: Dalit
- Parental Occupation:
  - o Father: Works as a labourer in a Gulf country
  - o Mother: Does some subsistence agriculture (a polite term for being unemployed)
- Total no. of members in the family: Six
- There are cell phone users in the family, has taken photographs, played games in it.
- Never Used a Computer, has not heard about internet

## **Observations**

### **I**

#### **Very first week in the Computer Class**

- Amar preferred to sit on a computer at the corners of the classroom where it is difficult not only for him to reach out to the instructor, but also for the instructors to reach him.
- On the first day it took him around five minutes to even hold a mouse properly. Must have taken a while before he could move it to serve his purpose.
- He asked questions with great reluctance. For instance, during the Nepali Unicode Romanised typing, he would first stare at the chart hung in the classroom depicting the keyboard layout for several minutes, and only asked if he did not understand it, while the other students would ask promptly and rarely bothered to look at the chart.
- Likewise, when asked to type whatever they liked, stories, experiences, anything, he wrote a note thanking his parents for sending him to school, and that he had to work harder to progress in life.

### **II**

#### **After one month in the computer class**

- He had learned to type Nepali Unicode on the Libre Office Writer, play audio-visuals, operate a compact digital camera, and see images on flicker.com.
- He was not only regular during his routine computer classes, but also sneaked in at other times whenever he could.
- His regular teachers told us that in the evenings he did not leave the classroom till it was past 8 pm in the evening and time for other teachers and community members.
- In the interview with us, he said that earlier his dream had been to become a cattle farmer, now that he was doing nice in computer, he wanted to learn more and become a computer tutor and run a desktop service in the village.
- Amar still has not been able to open his facebook account. Grade-sevens are still waiting for their turn. Moreover, he wants to talk with his father working in the Gulf over Skype. Which we hope he will be able to realize soon.