

Field Report – Christina Gerl



When I heard about the possibility to do research in Nepal, I was very excited. I've already travelled many countries and parts of the world. Through that I had the chance to get to know many different cultures, but I've never been to Asia before. I chose the topic of goat feeding, it took almost a year and a lot of preparation until I finally set my feet into Nepal. Writing emails, searching literature, reading lots of papers about Nepal etc., but of course all the preparation is always different than the experience itself and so I was curious about the moment when I would arrive in Nepal and later meet the first farmers. Especially I was looking forward to hear about their knowledge and of course to see the country itself.

I was travelling with the other Master students and our supervisor from BOKU Vienna. We were cordially received by the Caritas members in Kathmandu and had again some last preparations to do. We all introduced our research topics, questionnaires and schedules to the SAF-BIN team, got last suggestions for improvement and details for our field work. I did the data collection together with another Master student, whose topic was about goat breeding. We had the great chance to visit the NARC and meet specialists for goat feeding and breeding, which was very helpful. Besides that -luckily- we were able to experience delicious local food, busy streets, markets and temples. After one week we left Kathmandu for our final research area Kaski.

In our first days in Pokhara we made advantage of our still present supervisors from BOKU and SAF-BIN for a test interview, met the first farmers and again made final changes to our questionnaires. We got the chance to rent a room right above the SAF-BIN office in Pokhara and started to search for a translator. Thanks to our landlord we found the perfect translator and after several days our supervisors left to Kathmandu again.

Then we finally started our field work. In total we visited 31 farmers, weighed goats, took feed samples to analyse them, made interviews and created a feeding calendar with every farmer. We also had some expert interviews with people from NARC, Heifer (an NGO which also deals with goats) and a commercial goat farmer. It was really interesting to hear how much every farmer knows about



plants and of course their animals. Everybody was very helpful, on every farm we had a warm welcome and everyone was curious to see us – and so were we. I gathered a huge knowledge on how goat farming, and of course feeding, in Nepal works. Thanks to the farmers, our translator and of course the SAF-BIN team I was also lucky to learn a lot about Nepalese culture and people.

Before we spent the last week in Kathmandu, we used the time between the interviews to see the Nepalese mountains, the Chitwan National Park, went rafting, practised Yoga and saw many beautiful places of Nepal. Back in Kathmandu I got once again the chance to visit the NARC to discuss last details for the analysis of my feeding samples. All in all it was an enriching experience and I want to thank everyone involved for the support.

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