

## Field work experience in Nepal in March & April 2014

### Andrea Wiltberger

„Even with the best preparations, you should be surprised“– if this is a motto for me as an anthropologist, the field work in Nepal fulfilled all my expectations.

Going on the airplane with a bag full of research stuff, expectations and beliefs of the upcoming weeks, quickly after the arrival in Kathmandu this baggage was gone. The welcome and organization of our<sup>1</sup> stay from CARITAS Nepal was a very pleasant beginning of the whole research – to find our first ways through this soulful, slightly chaotic and fascinating city. The planning of the further research activities in Nepal was undertaken together with the staff members of CARITAS in the CARITAS Nepal headquarter in Kathmandu. It was a very nice and productive preparation together, although there were some unexpected changes concerning the research placements. Also the first interviews could be done at this time already with members of CARITAS Nepal.

To explore and prepare the first research area around Pokhara, the whole group of BOKU left in guidance of CARITAS members to Pokhara. There we could see the city, beautiful landscape scenery and above all the regional office of the SAF-BIN project, where we talked out detailed plans about the farmers groups and areas to visit for our interviews. Also we could see the usual office life and the work there, which also gave us an impression of the SAF-BIN project realization there.

The next part of my field stay was in the southwest of Nepal close to the Indian

border in the Bardyia district.

Already the way to there was more adventurous than the former travel – the impressive scenery of



Nepal's nature comes pretty close when driving dangerous routes on serpentines. The situation in Bardyia itself felt slightly different than in Pokhara or Kathmandu, since its touristic potential has been barely tapped and the climate is warm and heavy on mosquitos. Nevertheless we could organize ourselves and the research there well because CARITAS Nepal helped us everywhere, was extraordinarily caring and also provided us with guidance by our side. Dinesh Karki, himself of the same age and also just finished with his agronomy studies, was caring for us very considered and the talks and activities we faced together enriched my trip as a whole and made a deeper insight into the Nepalese culture possible. He was also our translator for the interviews, so he knew a lot about our research and interests.

The contact with the farmers themselves was always interesting, and I felt welcome on every doorstep and in every room we took a seat for the interview. I was impressed by the concession the farmers gave us, giving us their time and sharing information and knowledge about their life and farming practices.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrea Wiltberger performed her data collection at the same time as four other BOKU master students.

We used the time in Bardyia pretty intensive and got a lot further with our data collection there, which was also just possible because of the help and support of the SAF-BIN staff in Bardyia. When we reached the planned advance of data collection, we took the way back to Pokhara for the data collection at our second research area there. The life in Pokhara and the surroundings feels different because of the climate and the geographic conditions of the district, since it is mountainous and cooler there. Also farming systems are a bit different due to these reasons, and so I am very glad that we had the possibility to collect data in more than one region. Again it were very impressive insights into the life and culture of the people there that could expand with every interview and every farm visit I had. Being there makes it possible to understand the content of the interviews we have as data now.

Finally my overall impression of the research is that it wouldn't be possible without all the support and care from the SAF-BIN-Team at CARITAS Nepal - Dhan'yavāda! Nepal is an amazingly multi-facetted country in aspects of landscape, biodiversity, culture and habits. This is also an important factor the SAF-BIN project in Nepal has to face. I am very impressed how the SAF-BIN team deals with this diversity, sees it as advantage and tries to work with the farmers in a very thoughtful way. I hope that the earnings of the project will be fruitful, sustainable and long-lasting.

*Find more information on Andrea Wiltberger's research in the publications section of*

<http://www.safbin.org/>





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