

Memorable and Impactful Visit to Austria (November 2024)



The Opportunity Village Nepal (OVN), particularly the Anti-Human Trafficking Project in Pokhara, has enjoyed the support of DKA Austria since 2016. This partnership has been instrumental in addressing critical issues such as human trafficking, child labor, and unsafe migration. From November 13 to December 10, 2024, Sr. Anthonia and Babita visited Styria and Lower Austria (Vienna, Graz, St. Pölten), while Govinda Bhattarai (GSIF) and Nirutha BK visited Upper Austria and Carinthia (Linz, Klagenfurt). During their visit, they engaged with schoolchildren, parish youth, parents, and local parishioners, sharing insights about the Nepal project and facilitating meaningful discussions that deepened understanding of the issues at hand.

A standout moment was the meeting with the Governor of Lower Austria, who was deeply moved by the mission's work. He made a generous contribution to the DKA Austria for Nepal project, expressing his admiration with the words, "Oh, brave ladies have come from Nepal. I am happy to visit you all and wish you all the best." In Graz, Bishop William also expressed appreciation for the impactful work being carried out.

The team emphasized the message: "Saving lives matters." They compared their mission to that of a shepherd seeking the lost, binding wounds, and empowering the weak. Through a symbolic story illustrating the trafficking cycle, they highlighted the vital efforts of the sisters and staff in rescuing survivors, providing counselling, and promoting economic independence. This narrative resonated deeply with both teachers and students, leaving a lasting impression.

The project was selected as a model initiative for the Carol Singing Campaign in Austria. The selection, made in late 2023 and confirmed in early 2024, saw a visit from 12 members representing nine Austrian provinces of DKA in April 2024. This was followed by a team of journalists visiting the project in Nepal in November 2024, resulting in a documentary film to raise awareness and funds for Nepal.

Key Activities and Objectives:

- **Workshops at Schools and Parishes:** The workshops included an introduction to Nepal, its diversity, and challenges. Participants enjoyed Nepali dance performances, learned about the project's activities, and engaged in a game illustrating the support provided to vulnerable children and young women.
- **Press Conference:** A press conference was held to inform the media about the collaboration between DKA Austria, GSIF Nepal, and OVN in the fight against human trafficking.
- **Media Interviews:** The team participated in interviews with Radio Klassik, the Catholic News Agency, and the Austrian Press Agency, focusing on child labor, human trafficking, and the collaborative efforts to combat these issues.
- **Networking Meetings:** The team presented the project at the 10th anniversary celebration of Weltladen, a fair-trade organization, and engaged with Missio Austria to discuss cross-border trafficking prevention.



Beyond their advocacy efforts, the team also took time to explore Austria's rich cultural heritage, visiting historical sites, museums, and attending concerts, making the journey both educational and memorable. The Good Shepherd Mission extends heartfelt gratitude to DKA Austria for their unwavering support in making this transformative collaboration possible.



Message from Babita Farmar, Project Participant:

"I am deeply grateful to OVN for giving me the opportunity to visit Austria and share about our work and Nepal. It was my first trip outside of Nepal, and it was filled with wonderful and surprising experiences. Everything was new to me, and I met so many kind, responsible, and punctual people of all ages. I was particularly impressed by their hospitality, the efficiency of their transportation system, the quality of their water, the historical landmarks, and especially their school system.

I was also moved by how children, despite the cold weather, went door to door to support us. It showed that even in the face of challenges, people still give what they can. I was impressed by how they avoid wasting food and prefer donating old items rather than throwing them away.

During my visit, I learned invaluable lessons: time management, punctuality, balancing personal and professional life, speaking calmly, being adaptable, and minimizing waste. I realized that people donate not because they are wealthy, but because they want to make a positive difference in others' lives.

Moving forward, I plan to apply these lessons by being punctual, speaking more slowly, balancing my own life, and striving to positively impact others. Thank you, OVN, for this unforgettable experience."



Documented by Sr. Anthonia Soosaiappan