

My Name is Samira - 24 years old last year medical student from University of Zurich, Switzerland. Within my practical year I did an internship in rural western Nepal at HDCS Chaurjahari Hospital during February and March 2020.

Why developing country / Why Nepal As soon as I got the information about the possibility to do an exchange within my practical year I knew I won't miss this chance. But where should I go to? Soon I recognized that I have the chance to choose out of almost every country of this world and taking a decision seemed difficult at that time. But within this thought I realized that the possibility to choose is a privilege and is not given to everyone living on this earth. In this moment I knew I would like to visit a developing country, to see how different life can be compared to Switzerland in many aspects, e.g. food and water supply, medical care or safety. Thanks to a friend who knows a doctor who used to work in Nepal and to a student's association from University of Zurich I got in touch with the idea to go to Nepal. Additionally, Nepal seemed so similar to Switzerland concerning the nature with the mountains but at the same time so different concerning the state of development of Switzerland with HDI (Human development Index) 0.946 and the state of development of Nepal with HDI 0.579. I thought it would be a good experience to see how medical care is different in Nepal and that I would learn a lot from it (and I definitely did!)

My daily routine at the hospital Usually I started with a workout in my day. Most times I went on morning walk and the other days I did some stretching or exercises by myself. Especially the morning walks I keep in very good memory, I enjoyed walking early through the awakening small village, having beautiful views on the Bheri-River and the hills around Chaurjahari, recognizing how the first rays of the sun break through the thick morning fog creating a mystical atmosphere and last but not least having deep talks with my companion. After the breakfast (Nepali tea and roti with banana) everyone came together at devotion for singing, praying and updating the hospital team about the current state of the hospital and its patients. After that I joined the doctors on the morning round at the inpatient department. I examined patients, checked with the doctors therapeutic plans and future investigations. Additionally, every 2nd or 3rd day I did some speech about five minutes on a specific topic. I loved to do the classes, it was a great opportunity to strengthen my knowledge, to improve my English and my skills to talk to a reunion of people. Later I joined the doctors at dressing room, operation theater or at the outpatient department. Usually I switched between these three options, depending on what type of operation or dressing was going on. During the first days I felt a little disappointed because the focus was on observing rather than helping and doing things on my own as I was used lately in Switzerland. Luckily I was able to ask many questions and everyone made big effort for answering and explaining to me, so I focused on that. At 1pm we usually had lunch (dal bhat with curried vegetables and egg). We did one-hour lunch break and later I joined again the doctors until 4 or 5pm. After work I enjoyed some Nepali afternoon tea at the garden of the guest house. During the time before dinner I studied some open medical questions from the day by myself, did some exercise, joined the doctors playing football or just took rest. After dinner (dal bhat power - 24hour ;-)) I went on evening round at 8:15pm to check again the inpatient department. To finish the day we prayed again, concerning critical patients at the hospital. Before going to bed I usually felt very tired from the numerous impressions during the day. Sometimes I did some skyping with friends and family from back home but most of the time I just went straight to sleep.

Community programs At three days I had the opportunity to join the community programs of HDCS. I enjoyed these days a lot. Once we went to a school nearby to examine the children and teach them how to wash the hands properly. Another day we went to a nearby village to examine the mothers with their children. And once we went up on the hill to teach the children how to brush the teeth properly and distributed toothbrushes to everyone. I appreciated these opportunities to get closer to the people living around Chaurjahari Hospital. If my Nepali was better it would have been even greater.

Life around the hospital I spent a lot of time with the people living at the guest house: talking, laughing, playing guitar, singing, learning things about Nepali culture (not touching the bottle while drinking, start eating whenever you like, observing (;-)) how to eat with hands, how to fold momo's or bake roti, acquire survival Nepali language skills, learning that being direct is okay in Nepal, that trying to save ripe fruits on the trees from the monkeys is hopeless, that you should never forget to check the room for scorpions or snakes before going to bed and many more things...). There was not really time to feel lonely because everyone was so friendly, helpful and open-minded. Additionally, I very much enjoyed the nature around Chaurjahari, be it down the Bheri-river while bathing my feet in the cold water, up on the Mankot hill enjoying the great view and watching birds or during morning walk while holding a baby goat in my arms, it was just always great.

Moments at the hospital I won't forget One day there was a mother with a newborn child and the mother had very bad breast abscess. We were thinking about inhibiting milk production to help the mother. But I was told that it is not that simple. We must consider the situation of the baby too. What happens if the mother can't afford to buy other kind of nutrition for the baby if we stop her milk production? Another day I took history of a patient with very bad burn injury. To write down the whole history within this blog is not possible, but I just want to say that I felt really affected as I heard that at this time the patient doesn't even knew where her husband was, who is taking care of their children, how to finance the school fees of the children and she didn't even have enough money to buy any other food than rice and lentils. Another day there was a baby who wasn't breathing on its own anymore. The father needed to ventilate the baby manually during the whole night, but in the end the baby died. This all may seem now sad and hopeless, but in contrary, at Chaurjahari Hospital I learned that even with less resources it is possible to help people and have a huge impact on someone's live. There were many moments during which I just felt thankful that there is a hospital and someone who helps the people living in this rural part of Nepal.

What I take with me back to Switzerland I do more appreciate the clean tap water, the sufficient food supply and the medical care at my home country. The internship strengthened the motivation for my study because with this I can help people. I appreciated the kind, helpful and altruistic attitude of the Nepali people I met, and I would like to keep these values in my live. And of course, I have countless happy moments, the honest conversations, the laughing together and the sunshine of Chaurjahari in my heart.

Thank you to everyone for having me and making my stay so beautiful. It was a happy time of my life and I am grateful for each day I spend at Chaurjahari. I wish all the best for the future of HDCS and that the ongoing projects will succeed.