



Building a future

TWO YEARS ago, Christie Lam Lai-ming used \$4,000 of her own money and bought a small piece of land in Katunge Village, Nepal. She then collected \$25,000 in donations from her family and friends and built a two-storey cottage on it.

She rents the cottage to tourists, mainly Hongkongers, for \$50 each a night.

In exchange for the low cost of accommodation, travellers give English lessons to the village children.

So far, about 20 Hongkongers have stayed and taught there and, at present, the project is subsidising 32 children's tuition fees.

It is called The Future Village.



Ms Lam is a 28-year-old student working on a PhD in anthropology.

She grew up in a small, ordinary family and enjoyed the hustle and bustle of Hong Kong city life. That all changed five years ago when she visited Nepal for the first time. A local tour guide took her to the rural village of Katunge and her whole life changed.

"I was fascinated by the breathtaking scenery and the tranquil life there," she recalls.

"I have always liked backpacking and have been to a lot of countries before, but none have given me such a strong feeling of affection."

Katunge is a poor village, with no electricity supply. But it is rich in other ways.

"The villagers spend a lot of time chatting and getting to understand their family members. The relationships between the different neighbourhoods is close too. They are also very friendly and affectionate to tourists. Even though they are poor, they always give the best to their guests," she said.

Ms Lam chose Nepal's conservation policy as the topic

for her masters degree thesis. This gave her a reason to travel to Nepal regularly. Her PhD research also revolves around Nepal.

The more time she spent at

Christie Lam (above) is running a charity education project for children in Nepal. Photos: Christie Lam



Katunge village, the more she grew to love it. She decided to do something to contribute to the village and then that's when she came up with The Future Village.

"Many people appreciate my efforts in helping the underprivileged, but I think I gain more from the villagers than them from me. They have changed my view of life," said Ms Lam.

In Hong Kong, most people aim for a stable, high-paying job that will buy them the brand name goods they desire, says Lam, and everybody's life is more or less the same.

"But you can make yourself a different life by pursuing your dreams which are not necessarily about money and possessions. All you need is courage," she said while pointing out that many people are reluctant to give up their comfortable, material lives.

"It is ridiculous for some Hongkongers earning \$10,000 or \$20,000 to complain they don't have enough money when they sport luxury handbags."

Ms Lam says her visits to Nepal have made her realise that a happy life can be simple and the key to a fulfilling life is good interpersonal relationships based on love, faith and truth.

She hopes the project will allow more Hong Kong people to appreciate and experience the down-to-earth life of the Nepalese village, as well as give direct help to people in need.

For anyone interested in becoming involved, The Future Village is always looking for donations, both cash and materials, to help the children study.

For details, visit <http://alumni.cuhk.edu.hk/~suetling/future-village-nepal/index.htm>



two-storey
雙樓層的

hustle and bustle
忙碌喧鬧

tranquil
平靜

affectionate
親切的

underprivileged
被剝削的人

sport
炫耀