

Artists in Community International inspire and educate communities, individuals and leaders to be creative in and through art-making. We provide engaging programs and projects that are inclusive, challenging, dynamic and joyous. Our work is contemporary art-based with international flavours – inspired by our roamings and backgrounds.

Make Do Tell is an annual project we run in Nepal and /or India. We provide our services, the project is funded through the generous donations of many supporters.

Five days intensive training:

Arts practice for Community Care (Suicide Prevention)

We were asked by Dr Narendra Thagunna, founder of The School of Psychology Nepal (TSOP www.tsopnepal.org), to run a five-day intensive program for mental health professionals using the arts. We chose as its theme, *Arts in Community Care*.

Narendra is passionate about raising awareness in suicide prevention. In Nepal there is growing rate of mental illness, with an increasing number of incidents of suicide.

He approached us through Dr. Venkat Pulla, whose 2012 Conference In Strength Based Practice introduced us to the Nepalese community. Like us, Narendra believes that the arts can play a strong role in bringing a community together and developing a sense of self, and community, confidence.

Nineteen professional mental health workers came and we threw them in the deep end of a very practical workshop in drawing, painting, drama games and role-play exercises.



Mr Squiggle is a great drawing game to shed any fears about art making.

Most non-artists get very nervous when asked to do painting, however with Anne's encouragement they started with quick sketches. This was followed by designing, drawing and painting their own strength cards, that they knew they could use to understand their clients better.



Some of the many Strength Cards made to use with clients.



Large group painting/drawings based on the X-ray style of Australian Aboriginal art ... with a Nepali twist.



Their confidence was confirmed when they got involved in large group paintings. The painting work was inspired by a number of styles, including Australian Indigenous forms and Paul Klee.



Everyone is proud of their cards.

The drama games were there to help free inhibitions and bring a group together.



Participants also devised scenes about social issues, particularly those that are relevant in many of the remote parts of Nepal. Some of the issues we had heard of before, such as kidnapping and trafficking girls into prostitution. Others were new to us but just as shocking, such as banishing women to the cow shed during their menstrual cycle!

The topics were tough, including child abuse and trafficking, and abuse against women but there was also lots of laughter in the workshop.





Alex working with participants to develop their scenes

It was not the sort of professional development they were used to. Normally at these occasions they would expect a talkfest. They were always asking us when the Powerpoint presentation was going to start. They were surprised, and I think relieved, when told there was not going to be one. The response to the workshop was always very positive. Many would often say, how it never felt like work.

Throughout the week they were noting how they were feeling, and looking for ways that they could use the experience for their own community. Participants asked us how we felt about the workshops – it was absolutely wonderful to work with such a lovely group of talented, thoughtful, creative and committed people. We loved it.

Within a week of the workshop, two of the participants had used many of our ideas in their own workshops with disadvantaged children and posted the results on Facebook. We were both humbled and proud.



This is the direction we want Artists in Community International to be going, Training community workers to use arts practice in their work and for their community.

Artists In Community International

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