Digital Nepal
Geocaching in Kathmandu

Bold = Commentary
Italics = Subtitled

BABU RAM:

The world functioned earlier without technology, but humankind did not make much progress then.
Technological innovation that has emerged has contributed to development
It has enhanced the effort that one can put into work.
This has helped a lot in development and this is why I trust technology a lot

ANNA PEACHY:

I've been visiting Mahan Siddhartha High School for maybe six or seven years, and I come to Kathmandu probably once or twice a year on average. I think what's appropriate technology for Nepal at this stage in its development is technology that works with the resources that they have available, that's practical for widespread use and that is economically sustainable. Although they have the computers and quite recently they've had access to the internet at a useable speed, given the content that's on the internet is generally written for people who have fast broadband it's still not easy because electricity very often goes out and um that happens for three, four, five and at worst times, up to ten hours a day. And so it's very difficult to plan a computer lesson when you're not gonna be able to turn the computers on. So nothing is every really actually simple in Nepal when you're trying to access or work with technology.

Educationist Anna Peachey was keen to explore a hands-on geocaching workshop to develop her ideas about global access to digital technology. Not least because she is a member of the Open University team behind My Digital Life.

ANNA PEACHY;

I thought it was an opportunity to engage with active learning using visual and kinaesthetic techniques as well as the conventional skills in mathematics and reading and so on. And that

sort of pedagogy is quite different to much of the slightly formal teaching that occurs in most Nepali schools.

The GPS device is handheld, it only needs batteries, it's relatively cheap and it occurred to me to try geocaching, which is this kind of international game of hide and seek using GPS, and it introduces them to something that happens on a global scale. We started the workshop looking at use of the Cartesian axes: the x and y coordinates which can be used on a grid map to locate an object. So we created a scale map of the playground and the children hid sweets and gave each other the coordinates to find them

We then translated that up to looking at latitude and longitude and swapping coordinates to locate some capital cities.

When I started talking to them about what GPS is, this Global Positioning System which is something that was developed by the American Military and they put twenty-nine satellites in the sky.

So that's getting them to think about satellites and technology that's right out there in space. And I think that was quite an exciting aspect of the workshop.

On the first day of the workshop Anna explored mapping co-ordinates and the use of GPS equipment. Earlier she had hidden an object near the Pashupatinath Temple – a short walk from the school. This was to be the real test of the students' GPS skills.

The Mahan Siddhartha High school is situated between the two world heritage sites of the Hindu Pashupatinath Temple and the Boudhanath Buddhist Stupa, both close to the school.

Once the children found the geocache box they went on to the Pashupatinath Temple. Here, they logged the way point.

ANNA PEACHY:

The final exercise of the GPS workshop was for the children to create and register their own geocache box with the formal contents of a log book and pencil and objects for finders to swap in and out.

The creative dimension of the exercise was to create a number puzzle from the Boudha area.

There are lots of stupas in Kathmandu, but Boudhanath is by far the biggest and holiest and is the main centre for the Tibetan community in the city.

ANNA PEACHY:

The Boudhanath Stupa is rich with imagery and provides lots of number opportunities from which the geocacher has to extract our clues. For example, the structure has thirteen steps and rings reaching towards the higher levels of enlightenment, three platforms at its base, five colours in the prayer flags and so on.

Many visitors to Kathmandu come to Boudha, so using it as the starting point for our geocache is a nice opportunity to encourage people to look a little bit deeper and perhaps think a bit more about what the Buddhist imagery represents.

Once the clues were established and the site was registered on the geocaching website it was available for geocachers to follow, discovering not only two world heritage sites but also a small Kathmandu school committed to technological development.