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Jennifer McDonel, assistant professor of music education, recently went on a trip to Nepal to help bring better music education to the area.

“I have a friend, a colleague, his name is Summit Pokhrel. He works with children in Nepal, especially underprivileged and orphaned children to bring music education to them. I wanted to go to Nepal to support that mission to bring better music education to them. By doing that I was teaching music teachers there and also working with the children in his studio that he works with,” McDonel said.

Pokhrel has been trying to spread the idea of music education in his homeland of Nepal for years now. He owned a music school designed to teach as many children as possible, regardless of their ability to afford it or not.

The trip lasted a total of 10 days in Kathmandu. She spent part of the trip in a hotel and the other part with Summit Pokhrel and his family.

One thing she noticed while being there was how different it was from here. Kathmandu is an urban city, but that definition is not the same there because it is in a third-world country.

“During the time that I was there, for example, they were having electricity load shedding because they had had problems getting fuel and supplies from India so they were having an informal blockade,” McDonel said. “They had to cut down on the amount of electricity they were using and so maybe only 6-8 hours a day they would have electricity sometimes it wouldn’t even be consistent. You were never assured of if you were going to be able to take a hot shower or when you could cook meals and things like that.”

While there, McDonel was doing a professional development program for music teachers that was similar to what she does here. The music teachers in Kathmandu do not have access to music schools or anything like that to learn how to teach music.

The system in Nepal is more of a master-apprentice system, where the way to learn music is to find someone who is an expert at music.

McDonel spent most of her trip instructing adults on how to teach music instead of working with children, but she did spend one day out of her trip working with the children.

The importance of a trip like this is that music classes are not featured during the school day for the children like it can be here in the United States. The only way children can get music education in Kathmandu is if their parents can afford to pay for it outside of school. It is rare for children to be able to afford this in that area.

“I believe that music is one of our birthrights as music beings. We know that music has been part of every recorded culture in recorded history. Being able to learn how to make music is just a part of who we are as being human. It helps us communicate in ways that we can’t communicate through speech often times. I feel like everyone should have a chance to have a music education,” McDonel said.

