



THE HIMALENY CONNECTION



As you may know, we took our first humanitarian excursion to Kathmandu last Easter and stayed with an NGO called Nepal orphan's Home, otherwise known as Papa's House. We were hosted by their associated Volunteer House where we met the wonderful staff who accompanied us for the 10 days that we spent travelling to various volunteer placements; baby orphanages, primary schools for poor children and homes for the elderly.



L to R. Cham Gurang (guide), Sunita Pandey (Managing Director) Saroj Darji „Himal Shahi (VH manager), Rabi

It took nearly two years from the time that I started to put together the idea of taking a group of students, staff and parents to Nepal until we actually boarded our plane and set off on our adventure. When we returned, the group unanimously felt that the experience of staying at Volunteer House and meeting the children and staff of Nepal Orphan's Home was most certainly something to build upon into the future, and not just as a school activity. As a result, we set in motion a plan to enable NOH to spread their message in our community.

We formed a committee that we called the Himaleny Connection to reflect the way we felt following our time there. We collaborated to raise the funds within our group to bring six Volunteer House staff, four of whom are original Papa's House children, here to Maleny. The objective of this sponsorship is to conduct several events and 'connect' our communities more deeply to advance the work for the children of NOH.

We have several events proposed over the length of our Nepalese visitors' stay. They will arrive on September 25th and spend time with their host families. The host families are connected to Maleny High, the Doonan, Gray, Sullivan, Vinall and Fredericks families as well as teaching staff Ashleigh Ebenezer and myself. We will be conducting a community gala fundraiser at Maleny Community Centre and an information, meet and greet at Tesch Park in the early part of October. Local schools have invited the visitors to participate in programs of guest speaking and cultural exchange in the first week of term four.

We are thrilled to be able to create an opportunity to spread the word about what our visitors do for the children for whom they care, having seen at first hand the difference it has made to their lives and their future possibilities. It is our hope that we can help both of our communities to experience the connection that we felt in the brief time we spent at Papa's House.

We will be contacting families through our school email to let parents know about the upcoming events and to invite you all to take part in our endeavours. Please read on to find out more about Nepal Orphan's Home and Volunteer Nepal.



Shreya Upadhyay, Volunter Nepal Communications Manager.

Improving the Lives of Poor Children in Nepal



Nepal Orphans Home (NOH) began in March of 2005 when a friend took Michael Hess to an 'orphanage' that needed help in Dhapasi, a village in the northern outskirts of Kathmandu district. He found a small, rundown house with two dozen destitute children. Malnourished, in poor health, and not attending school, the children were forced by the owners to beg on the streets. Michael assumed management of the home, renovated the building, and began Papa's House to care for the children.

A carpenter from Florida, Michael had never traveled outside the United States until in early 2004 he volunteered with a nongovernmental organization in Nepal, restoring a school building outside of Kathmandu. Moved by the plight of the children, living in poverty, but rich in spirit, Michael vowed to return to help. Within six months Michael did return to Nepal, having sold his home and business in Florida. Coming across the children living in the dilapidated house that day in March transformed his life. And Michael (Papa) has since transformed the lives of hundreds of poor children in Nepal.

In 2018 Nepal Orphans Home began its fourteenth year of operations, providing for 76 children in three Papa's Houses and 20 young adults living in transition housing while attending college preparatory classes. Nearly half are former Kamlari girls rescued from indentured servitude. The Chelsea Education and Community Center began its sixth year of vocational and life skills training for the older Papa's House children and its fourth year of literacy classes to local women in the community of Dhapasi. Volunteer Nepal again hosted nearly a hundred international volunteers. NOH Outreach continued to provide assistance throughout Nepal, including support for earthquake relief and reconstruction.



Our Mission

Nepal Orphans Home attends to the welfare of children in Nepal who are orphaned, abandoned, or not supported by their parents. NOH provides for the children's basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing, as well as schooling and health care, and administers to their emotional needs with love and compassion, allowing them to grow up in a nurturing environment. Our mission is not just to rescue children from abject poverty, but to enable the children to develop and realize their potentials.



Nepal and the Kamlari System

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world, in 2010 ranking 138th out of 169 countries in the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index. For generations, agricultural laborers have been forced to work for landowners to repay debts incurred earlier, sometimes by their parents or grandparents. Often to have any access to land, these workers would have to pledge their children, usually daughters, as working collateral. The bonded children would also be forced to labor for the landowners. Under the kamlari system in rural Nepal, destitute families are pressured by hardship to sell their daughters...and not just as agricultural workers or as household servants. Indentured children can be found working in hotels, restaurants, brick kilns, stone quarries, and construction, among other areas. Sometimes these children end up trafficked in the sex trade.

There are existing laws in Nepal intended to protect children. Political instability, civil strife, corruption, and the lack of a coherent development strategy have all contributed to the lack of effective enforcement of the laws. Furthermore, Nepal's Child Labor Act of 2000 does not cover family-based work, work in private homes, or work in agriculture--which account for the overwhelming majority of Nepalese child workers.

Nepal Orphans Home's Provision for Rescued Kamlaris

Early in 2008 Nepal Orphans Home began collaboration with Society Welfare Action Nepal (SWAN), a Nepali nongovernmental organization operating in the Dang district, to rescue kamlari girls from indentured servitude. NOH renovated two buildings in Narti and opened the Lawajuni (New Beginning) Home, providing shelter, food, clothing, schooling, and health care for girls rescued by SWAN. Over that year more than 60 girls who had been sold into slavery came to the Lawajuni Home, gaining their freedom, recovering their childhoods and attending school. NOH was able to bring 12 of these girls to Papa's House in Dhapasi.

In early 2009, NOH brought another 26 rescued Kamlari girls from Lawajuni to Dhapasi, where the education was significantly better, opening up a third home, known as Papa's Kalpana (Imagine) House. Later in the same year, 28 more girls rescued by SWAN came from Lawajuni to live in NOH's fourth home, Papa's Gumba (Sanctuary) House.

In 2018 Nepal Orphans Home began its fourteenth year of operations, providing for 76 children in three Papa's Houses and 20 young adults living in transition housing while attending college preparatory classes. Nearly half are former Kamlari girls rescued from indentured servitude. Nepal Orphans Home (NOH) provides a safe haven for children who had been living in extreme poverty, sometimes even neglected and abused. Before coming to NOH, the children had little hope for the future. After becoming part of a large, loving family at Papa's House, the children's cheerfulness, diligence, respect for each other as individuals, and integrity set a fine example for the community. Papa's House children attend a local English-medium private school. They work very hard at their studies; but even then, due to their disadvantaged backgrounds, they need extra help. We have hired after-school tutors to supplement their learning. With their enhanced education, our children develop their aptitudes and gain the self-confidence that will guide them into adulthood as independent and responsible individuals who have the skills to earn a living wage. In the future, they will be contributing citizens in the growth and stabilization of Nepal.



Nepal Orphans Home is many things to many people, but it is one thing to all people, a lifeline extended by a warm smile, a friend in need, without politics, without judgment, simply compassion. Thanks given to our widespread donor base consisting of good people working for a living and giving what they can afford, and sometimes really can't afford, we manage to be the person an abandoned baby sees and feels holding her, feeding her, smiling down at her; the family with a medical calamity without cash in a country without insurance and on a pay for cure basis; the remote village that drought has claimed the last of their food and has a runner enter their village and say that there is a truck load of rice and other staples waiting for them where the road ends and to come and get it.

NOH is the provider of an education for 260 women in our own village, free of cost, paid handsomely in return by their smiles, confidence, laughter, and the overall wellbeing of our village.

NOH is the buyer of chemo and pain meds for terminally ill children whose families cannot afford it, but more importantly we are the smiling presence in the ward granting last wishes and creating a celebratory environment for one birthday or another.

NOH is the daily hot and nutritious lunch given to children in an "untouchables" village if they attend the school that we built taught by teachers whose salaries we help support.



NOH is the loving embrace and good cheer welcoming children to our family where we refresh daily for them our support of their dreams, this given to so many children who for numerous reasons have found themselves without anyone.

NOH is the organization who provided shelter to hundreds of Kamlari (indentured servants) once rescued, and then brought those who wished to come to our Kathmandu homes to pursue their regained childhood in a loving and secure environment, to be a part of a family where every member supports the goals of each other and together we achieve them.

NOH is this and so much more administered by a Board of professionals dedicated to helping those in need with their expertise, compassion and often their bank account.

NOH has 54 children currently in college (grades 11-12 or plus 2) or university. In April of 2019 fourteen more will join them. As mentioned earlier this is our eighth year of sending children to college and thus many of the original group are now in their careers. Looking back over time at these young men and women who came to us while very young is incredibly touching. Many individuals who had first hand experience with the NOH family became such kind supporters, offering what they could and when they could. And then there is Toni Thomson, the extraordinary film maker who made the documentary on NOH, *What It Takes to Be Extraordinary*, which continues to generate new supporters, and through her "Possible Worlds Foundation," provides yearly support. Laura and Justin Nimick, who began "Life's Handy Work" to help support our educational program, after Laura volunteered with us ten years ago. There has been a handful of unsung heroes, incredibly kind donors who have always sought anonymity, but have year after year given with such warmth and grace to help our children succeed, to all of you the NOH family salutes and carries your kindness and care in our hearts.



NOH started Volunteer Nepal in 2005. The program connects volunteers with talent and passion to poor villages across Nepal in great need. It has been a very robust program that consistently makes big differences in the lives of individuals, families, and communities that in many cases had not experienced westerners before. Through Volunteer Nepal's volunteers we have been able to financially support education programs in many areas, as well as bringing qualified teachers to them. We have been able to run medical camps for remote areas, and after the earthquake of 2015 Volunteer Nepal staff was at some of our placements devastated by the quake within 2-3 days bringing blankets, food, tents, cash, to the people there. Long before others arrived Volunteer Nepal brought a lifeline. Some of these places were very difficult to reach, but we did, and we returned many times to restock what was needed. Volunteer Nepal fees make all that possible, and also goes a long way towards the operational cost of NOH and its many outreach programs that are designed to provide meaningful assistance for children in need in Nepal.

From the beginning it was our goal to one day be able to do all we do in a self-dependent way, and Volunteer Nepal was part of that concept. We are still years away from reaching that goal, and with the number of children we have in college and more than that still behind them we will continue to need the support of the broadening family of NOH. Our children are the living embodiment of the mythological Phoenix, rising from the ashes of their early childhood traumas to become the exceptional young men and women, generous in spirit, they have become.

