

There are no words to describe the changes in these children in the short period they are at NRH. Here are just a few of the thousands of “before” and “after” pictures in our files:



Phurtenzi at time of Admission



Phurtenzi only 16 days after admission



Anish at time of admission



Anish only 26 days after admission



### How You Can Help

Dr. Harish, the babies whose lives were saved at the NRH, and the thousands of girls liberated from bondage would give you, our donors, a rousing cheer if they could. In their stead, we at NYOF offer our profound thanks for making all these good things possible.

We understand that in these difficult economic times, making charitable donations may not be easy, but at the same time, it is especially important that you get as much “bang for the buck” as you can. A donation to NYOF fulfills these objectives. Dollar for dollar, your contribution will make a more meaningful impact on the life of a child than you could accomplish with almost any other charitable contribution. Charity Navigator, the largest evaluator of charities in the U.S., has awarded NYOF a four-star rating – the highest available – for the cost-effective use of your donations. **It costs only \$340 to restore a malnourished child to health and educate the mother so that the condition will not recur, and only \$100 to liberate a little girl from bonded servitude, bring her home to live with her family, educate her for a year, and provide the family with a piglet or a goat to compensate for her lost wages.** Thank you for your continuing support. Please give as generously as you can.

Warm regards,



Please visit our web site [www.nyof.org](http://www.nyof.org)

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OLGA D. MURRAY  
President

MIKE PREISS  
Chairman

YALE JONES  
Secretary

STEVE FOX  
Secretary

TOTTON P. HEFFELFINGER  
Asst. Secretary, Asst. Treasurer

IAN COATS MACCOLL

LORI PERLSTADT

HAYDI SOWERWINE

#### STAFF

JANIS OLSON  
US Executive Director

SOM PANERU  
Nepal Executive Director



# Nepalese Youth Opportunity Foundation

3030 BRIDGEWAY, SUITE 123

SAUSALITO, CA 94965

415-331-8585

FAX: 415-331-4027

E-MAIL: [INFO@NYOF.ORG](mailto:INFO@NYOF.ORG)

DEAR FRIENDS I have just returned after an exciting and satisfying six months in Nepal. There is so much going on politically and with NYOF's projects that I hardly know where to begin. On the political front, the Maoists are out of the government in spite of their good showing at the polls last year. For now, all is calm and, I hope, not “the calm before the storm.” In many other ways, times in Kathmandu were rocky – only eight hours of electricity a day (and half of that in the middle of the night), a great shortage of water, and political demonstrations that stopped the economy in its tracks and more or less closed down the country, including the schools, for much of the six months I spent there. In spite of all these obstacles, the Nepali people seem to have an unlimited capacity for resilience, patience and good humor, so it was not as grim to live among them in such trying circumstances as it might seem.

NYOF's fortunes are another story. Our projects are flourishing and our kids are blossoming. In each of these letters I try to include stories about the successes of the graduates whose education we supported over the years. Once again, I'd like to tell you about one of them.

#### Dr. Harish – hardship, brilliance, scientific accomplishment

About 15 years ago, we learned about a gifted medical student who had a tuition scholarship to the best medical school in Nepal, but whose parents could not afford to pay his living and ancillary expenses. We chipped in for the last year or two of medical school, and when he was offered a surgical residency in Pakistan, we paid his air fare and living costs there. Today, Dr. Harish is head of a large hospital in Nepal and a passionate advocate of medical care for the poor. Twenty percent of all patients at his hospital receive free medical care, and he is brimming with ideas about expanding medical assistance to those who cannot afford it. We are discussing the possibility of estab-

lishing a Nutritional Rehabilitation Home at his hospital to alleviate the problem of the many malnourished children in the area, as well as other ways to help his mission. A pretty good outcome for an investment of a couple of thousand dollars several years ago!

Take a bow, donors, for it is your support over the years that has made these happy endings possible.

#### More piglets, more goats, more girls freed from bondage

And now for many of our donors' favorite NYOF project – our Indentured Daughters Program. We liberate from labor bondage young girls in western Nepal who would otherwise be sold by their parents as household servants on an annual contract. Some of these children are as young as six, and they spend their childhood as domestic slaves. Very few attend school. Abuse of all kinds is rampant since there is no one who checks on their working conditions.

#### SUMMER 2009

Almost a decade ago, we started to rescue these girls by offering their parents a piglet or a goat if they would allow their daughters to stay at home or return from their bondage. They raised the animal and sold it at the end of the year for as much



NYOF saved her from spending her childhood in bondage (turn to page 2)



A healthy baby and an educated mother are ready to leave the Nutritional Rehabilitation Home (turn to page 3)

or more than they received for their daughters' labor. Simultaneously, we enrolled all the girls in school at our expense and launched a dynamic awareness campaign to empower the girls and turn the community against this inhumane practice. **Over the years, we have rescued more than 4000 girls by this method.**

The bonding contracts are ordinarily made at a festival celebrated in mid-January. During this year's festival, we were provided with a striking demonstration of the tremendous impact we have had in ending this appalling practice. A reporter from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Meredith May, and a photographer, Carlos Gonzalez, came to Nepal to investigate and report on the sale of these children.

First we took them to the Dang District, one of five in west Nepal where the bonding custom is common. **We have been working in**



We ask liberated girls, "Who wants an education?"



We gave her family this goat to allow her to live at home and attend school

**Dang since 2000 and have just about wiped out the practice there.** When we brought our program to Dang, fathers would boast about the number of daughters they had bonded away, local politicians would arrange labor contracts as favors to their constituents, the streets were filled with labor contractors coming to buy the girls' services, and the bus park was crowded with frightened, weeping little girls about to be sent off they knew not where.

Today, nine years later, only a few girls are bonded away in Dang. The rare arrangements are made between the fathers and the labor contractors on the sly and the family is looked down upon in the community. Thousands of liberated girls marched in a parade in January to celebrate their freedom, and at the rally that ended the parade, the Chief District Officer of Dang (similar to a Governor) declared Dang a zone free of bonded labor. For the first time ever in Nepal, the local police arrested the few labor contractors who dared to come to the district to make bonding arrangements. (The practice has been ruled illegal by the Nepali Supreme Court in a suit brought on behalf of NYOF.)

The reporters were impressed, but curious about the bonding situation in Dang before we began working there in 2000. For a demonstration, live and in color, of how open and shameless the sale of these children had been prior to our arrival on the scene, we took them to the Kailali District, where the bonding custom is still prevalent because NYOF has not been able to start its abolition program yet.

There, in a small village of mud huts, men in leather jackets wearing dark glasses and sporting cell phones were riding up and down the street on their



Free at last and going to school

motorcycles looking to buy child servants. One, remarkably, a journalist, was there to renew the contract for a 16 year old. Another, who had engaged the services of a 10 year old in his home the previous year, also wanted to renew the contract and in addition, to buy another girl to work in his second home. That girl's father refused an offer of \$80 for a year of his daughter's services, so the buyer went elsewhere to make his deal. As we discovered later, the father had already reached an agreement with another buyer for \$95 for the year, half of it up front, a price considerably higher than average. All through these negotiations, Kausi, their daughter, sat silently and sadly on the bench in front of their hut, one parent on each side, as the adults haggled over the price of her future.

We were able to share some of the most gratifying aspects of this project with the reporters, who thus saw both "before" and "after." They were impressed with the tremendous response of these young girls to their new-found freedom. They saw how a number of the older rescued girls have demonstrated remarkable initiative and leadership by forming a co-op. The members of the co-op pool their resources to start projects that generate income and provide them with jobs. These girls' faces were filled with determination and

**Please let us know your email address, so you can receive Olga's email dispatches from Nepal as well as other news about NYOF!**

confidence, despite the unbelievable hardships they've experienced.

The journalists were also impressed with the empowerment training we provide the girls after their return from bondage. This includes reminding them that they have a right to go to school and that the bonding arrangements are illegal. Some of the first girls liberated, a few of whom are now in college, have formed a forceful advocacy group to oppose the practice in their villages. It was deeply satisfying to see these girls, who had been sold like chattel to work under slave-like conditions, awakened to their value as individuals and realize that education can open opportunities for them that they never dreamed possible.

That's the good news. The bad news is that there are still several thousand girls bonded away that NYOF has not been able to reach with its program of liberation. We have expanded our program to the Bardiya District, one of the five where the bonding practice is prevalent, but there are still three more districts to go. **With your help, we can free from bondage the thousands of young girls who still suffer under the yoke of this abhorrent custom. It will cost you only \$100 to free a girl and educate her for a year.**

If you would like to see the *Chronicle* article and a short video of our journey with the reporters, you can do so by following the link at [www.nyof.org](http://www.nyof.org).

## Saving the lives of malnourished children

In the late 1990s, we became aware that children were being discharged from hospitals in Nepal in a severely malnourished state because the hospital needed the beds for those who were more acutely ill. When we learned of three children who died after discharge as a result of this practice, we decided we needed to do something about it. So in 1998, we established our first Nutritional Rehabilitation Home (NRH) in Kathmandu. It is devoted to restoring the health of malnourished children and educating their mothers in all aspects of child care.

Half the children under five years of age in Nepal are malnourished, which is a leading cause of death among children of this age group. There is a tragic absence of knowledge about nutrition throughout the country; this factor, more than poverty, is the cause of the appallingly high rate of malnutrition. Our NRH's address this problem.

They are small hospitals where mothers and children live while the child is built up to normal weight and health and the mother is educated about nutrition and other matters relating to the health of her child. Only food readily and inexpensively available throughout the country is utilized, and our doctors, nurses, and nutritionists have become expert in imparting the principles of child care to the mothers, almost all of whom are illiterate.

The mothers are also trained to pass on the knowledge they have gained to other mothers when they return to their villages. Most of the admissions to the NRH's that originate in the community are now referred by the mothers of children whom we have restored to health. When villagers see a pitifully frail child, sometimes close to death, leave the village to come to an NRH and return healthy, sturdy and happy, it is not difficult to convince parents to bring their own malnourished children to the NRH.



Mothers are trained in child care and nutrition, including preparing food so it retains its nutrients

At the request of the Ministry of Health, we are building NRH's all over the country. Few families can afford to bring their malnourished children to the capital, so we make these services accessible to them locally. We have just started construction of our tenth such facility outside Kathmandu. Our long term plan is to establish at least 14 NRH's, one on the grounds of the main hospital in each of Nepal's 14 administrative zones, and after five years, to transfer responsibility for their financing and operation to the government.

Skeptics familiar with how things run in Nepal told us the government would never accept responsibility. But guess what – it's happening! The first of these outlying NRH's, in Nepalgunj, reached its five year anniversary last December, and the Ministry of Health in Kathmandu has directed the zonal hospital to take it over. The Ministry will provide financial support. The second completes five years of operation in July, and we anticipate the same result. NYOF will continue to have a role in evaluation, monitoring and re-training, but the basic support will be provided by the government of Nepal.

**We are very proud that 5000 child/mother pairs have been treated and educated at the NRH's since the first one was established in 1998. The average period of hospitalization is five weeks, and the average cost to restore the health of a child and educate the mother is only \$340.**