

## Taking the Show in the Road

Last year, we began a pilot project to try to head off malnutrition by taking the tried and tested methods we have developed at the NRHs to remote areas of the country. We established camps in rural areas, distributing leaflets in advance to the remote, roadless villages in the area, inviting children, their family members, and women of childbearing age to the free camp. Doctors, nurses, and nutritionists were in attendance, all experienced in imparting knowledge about children's health to usually illiterate mothers. All the children who attended the camps were assessed and the mothers were taught to prepare a nourishing and easily digestible mix of locally available food. Children who were only moderately malnourished would be helped by this formula. Those who suffered from severe malnourishment were referred to the nearest NRH. Two follow-up camps will be held to assess the success of the program.

An interesting aspect of the project is that the mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law of the mothers and prospective mothers were also urged to attend. In Nepal, the tradition is that after marriage, a wife goes to live with her husband's family. From that day onward, she is subject to the dictates of her in-laws in almost all matters, including child rearing. The ten years of experience at our NRHs has taught us that some mothers who have returned to their villages fully instructed in good child care practices, were unable to apply their knowledge because their in-laws insisted that traditional methods of nourishing children and maintaining their health be followed. Therefore, the in-laws in the family are also encouraged to attend the training sessions. ✿

## How You Can Help

**For all these successes, we have you, our donors, to thank. None of these good works would be possible without your loyal support and generosity. Your contributions are making a difference by transforming the lives of children who come into the world with the odds heavily stacked against them. Like you, we have watched the pictures on television of hollow-eyed, cadaverous children from developing countries who have no prospect for a decent future, and felt helpless to do anything about it. We are blessed with the good fortune to have found a way to cut through the barriers of poverty, caste, and hopelessness and give kids in Nepal the opportunity to change their lives.**



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**And at an unbelievably low cost. It costs only \$100 to rescue a little girl like Sushila from bondage (and \$50 a year to keep her in school thereafter), \$300 to restore the health of a malnourished child and educate the mother so that the condition does not recur, and \$300 a year to send a blind or deaf child to a special boarding school.**

**Please give as generously as you can. You can donate on-line ([www.nyof.org](http://www.nyof.org)), by credit card, or by check, using the enclosed envelope.**



# Nepalese Youth Opportunity Foundation

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**DEAR FRIENDS** *Whoever first said, "may you live in interesting times" would have been gratified by the situation in Nepal today. It has been a fascinating spring politically here. The elections are over, and to the surprise of everyone, not least the Maoists themselves, they won big. All the people here want a "New Nepal," and that is the buzzword on everyone's lips. Most have a "wait and see" attitude and are hopeful that the serious economic, political and social problems of the country will be resolved soon.*

## The Rescue of Sushila

*NYOF, too, has had an interesting spring. In April, PBS aired a documentary on the program NOW about our project to free young girls from indentured servitude in west Nepal. They sent over an observant and savvy crew from New York, which did an excellent job in explaining and describing the terrible practice of indenturing young girls as servants. I know that many of you saw the program (if you did not, you can find it at <http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/414/video.html>). I thought you might be interested in some "behind-the-scenes" events during the filming. The program included the story of Sushila, an 11 year old girl we rescued on camera from her job as a bonded servant, but what went on behind the scenes was just as interesting.*

Sushila had been indentured by her father to work as a servant for a family in Kathmandu. Neither she nor her father received any compensation for her services, but the indenturing family promised to provide room and board and send her to school; to their credit, they did so. The PBS crew went to Sushila's home village, where they met the woman who was her employer. She had come to fetch Sushila to return to work for a third year. The employer could have been assigned the role by central casting, so perfectly did she fit it. She vehemently denied that she employed a child servant and went sashaying off down the road, angry at the suggestion. Of course, she returned later, packed up Sushila, and brought her to resume work in Kathmandu.



Sushila came from a home like this

We contacted Sushila's father and asked if he would allow her to return home, in exchange for which NYOF would provide the family with a piglet or a goat, which they could sell at the end of the year for a profit. In addition, we offered to give her a scholarship to attend school, as we do to for every rescued girl. He agreed, and took the 10 hour bus ride into Kathmandu, where Raju, a member of our staff, met him. Raju had called the employer in advance to tell her about

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Sushila discovers she will get to go home

the purpose of their impending visit. But when they arrived at the home where Sushila was working, the employer was not at home. This is where one of the two best scenes in the program occurs – Sushila was called out of the house, saw her father, and was puzzled at first by his presence. But when she learned why he was there, she broke into one of the brightest smiles that ever graced a screen.

The employer arrived a few minutes later, accompanied by a posse of relatives, and a royal row ensued between Raju and the employer and her relatives. Only a few seconds of the argument is in the film. They objected to the cameras, and demanded to know why Raju was picking on them, since Nepal is full of child laborers. Raju replied that we had not singled them out, that we had rescued 3500 girls in Sushila's position, and that they must know child labor is illegal in Nepal. He demanded that she be allowed to go home with her father. The dispute lasted more than an hour, during which tears coursed down Sushila's face as the adults around her squabbled about her fate. "You see," said the posse, "she is crying because she loves

it here and doesn't want to leave." Her father said not a word – he is a poor, uneducated man, and in some aspects Nepal is still a feudal society. It would be unthinkable for him to argue with these rich and educated people, not even in defense of his daughter.

Sushila was finally allowed to depart with her father and Raju. On their way to the bus station to return to their village, they stopped for a bite to eat, and Raju said Sushila could not stop smiling. Then came the other priceless scene: Sushila is on the bus with her father, and when she is asked what she will do now, she says "I'm going to go to school, and I will play, and do work in my own home." In that order! There's a child who knows what's important in her life!



Rescued and in school!

Sushila's story is far from the worst among the children who are bonded away. Many of these little girls are severely abused, since their working conditions are entirely at the discretion of their employers and no one checks to see how they are treated. At least, Sushila was allowed to attend school – a privilege which few of the bonded girls enjoy.

We are on a crusade to rescue all these children and eradicate the bonding custom in Nepal. If you would like to help, what better time to do it than now – as a Mother's Day gift. For \$100, you can bring a girl home to live with her family, buy a piglet or a baby goat to compensate them, pay her school expenses for a year and support our terrific awareness program to turn the community against the well-established bonding practice – all in your mother's name. We will tell her about your gift if you give us her address.

If you would like a copy of the program on DVD, we will send one to you free of charge. ❀

**It only costs \$100 per year to save a girl from bonded servitude, pay for her school expenses, and provide her family with a goat or piglet.**

**You can honor your mother or grandmother this Mother's Day, May 11th, by rescuing one or more girls in her honor. Please provide us with her name and address so we can tell her about your contribution.**

**If you donate by credit card at [www.nyof.org](http://www.nyof.org), you can immediately notify a loved one of the gift by emailing her a beautiful Mother's Day eCard.**

## Dolma, the Newest K House Cutie

Our newest little girl at K House, five year old Dolma, hails from one of the most remote areas of Nepal, close to the Tibetan border. It is inaccessible by road, without electricity, very cold in the winter, and with chronic food shortages. Her mother died and her father ran off with another woman, leaving Dolma to live with an uncle who did not want her and could barely feed his own children.

An Austrian anthropologist working in the area came upon her – cold, dressed in rags, hungry, and sick. She simply could not leave the child there under the circumstances and, with her uncle's permission, brought her to Kathmandu on the way back to Austria. After much searching for a suitable home, she found K House.

Dolma is a rosy-cheeked little Tibetan girl, about five years old, with a smile that would knock your socks off. The girls at K House took to her immediately, carrying her everywhere, petting her, and offering whatever possessions they had that would please her. She could speak Tibetan but not Nepali and only a few words of English she had learned from the anthropologist – a recipe for frustration on all sides. But by the next day, Dolma had taught her sisters the words for ears, noses, eyes, heads, feet, in Tibetan, and Dolma herself had learned them in Nepali. They all proudly demonstrated their new-found knowledge.



Dolma on arrival at K House



and a few days later

Now, a few months later, Dolma is practically the mascot of K House. She is extremely smart, a bit fiery, and has picked up an astonishing amount of English. And very affectionate – full of life and love. She has a bright future. We have enrolled her in one of the best schools in Nepal. NYOF will educate her through college and as far as her abilities will take her, and K House will provide her with the warmth and wisdom that every child needs.

Such are the satisfactions of life here in Nepal. ❀

## J House and K House

The kids at our two homes for children in Kathmandu, J House (for boys) and K House (for girls) are doing well. Most of you know about these homes, where children from the most horrific backgrounds are provided with love, security, and an excellent education, until they are able to stand on their own feet. One of the my greatest sources of pride is to see how these kids have formed themselves into the most devoted, supportive family – bonds which stay with them when they leave the houses to attend college or vocational training, and go to work and live successful adult lives.



K House girls at a pajama party at Olga's house

Sometimes I think I am exaggerating the virtues of these children and the pleasure they give by their loving warmth and liveliness. But recently, my feelings were confirmed by this message I received from someone who went to visit the houses, bringing gifts from his young son in the U.S. and his classmates. Here is what he said:

*"Words fail me as I try to explain to you what...I experienced as we visited these homes today. The kids had a real emotional impact on me, and I get teary even now thinking back on the interaction we had. I had no idea what to expect during our visit. We were greeted in the front garden by two dozen girls, each of whom politely said 'namaste' as they touched their palms together out of respect. Several girls wrapped themselves around our arms or clasped our hands as they escorted us into the living room. They referred to us as 'brother,' and several spoke very good English... They were so genuinely grateful and appreciative [for the gifts]. Next, several girls...proudly led*

*us on a tour of their house, showing us their artwork, the bunk beds they share, their garden, etc. It was clear that while the girls don't have parents, they do have a very close-knit family. [They] were so affectionate and warm that it was impossible not to fall for them. We finally and reluctantly returned to our car...riding back most of the way in silence as we tried to process what we had experienced. It was an unforgettable four hours."* ❀



J House boys sporting new jeans!

## Nutrition Rehabilitation Homes

These homes are small hospitals devoted entirely to restoring very malnourished children to health and educating their mothers in nutrition and all other aspects of child care so that the condition does not recur. Since half the children under five years of age in Nepal are malnourished and this is a leading cause of death in this age group, these centers provide a critical service. Because of the help provided by our doctors, nurses, and nutritionists, children who are admitted looking as though they cannot survive much longer, leave the NRH an average of five weeks later as bouncy, plump little kids, brimming with life. We use only food easily and inexpensively available throughout Nepal to work these miracles. After discharge, a field worker visits the children to be sure they are maintaining their weight gain. We are grateful to the dZi Foundation for its loyal and ongoing support of this wonderful program over the years.

We began this project ten years ago with a small facility in Kathmandu above a

children's clinic. Later, we moved to larger quarters, with 23 beds. At the urging of the Nepali government, we have been establishing such centers throughout the country so that children who cannot come to Kathmandu can also get help. At present, there are six NRHs in different parts of Nepal, and we are building three more, some in areas which were not possible to work in during the Maoist insurgency.



Mothers feeding their babies under the watchful eye of NRH staff

Over 3000 children have been restored to blooming good health over the years at the NRHs, and their mothers trained in the principles of child care. The average stay is five weeks, and the average cost is only \$300.



Sumitra at admission...



and 53 days later



Twins Sushila and Sumitra at admission



and 30 days later