



Next Generation Nepal

NGN Newsletter

March 2007

Dear Friends of NGN,

The summer has arrived in Nepal, which means I'm no longer able to see my breath inside my apartment. That is reason enough to celebrate. But we can always find more here at Next Generation Nepal.

The formation of an interim government with the former Maoist rebels gives people hope; hope that the elections in June may be successful, hope for a lasting peace in Nepal for the first time after ten years of civil war. Headlines blared phrases like "new dawn."

We continue to have success in finding parents of trafficked children – though the conditions in which we find them are sometimes dangerously poor. We keep searching for innovative solutions to reunite children with their parents, even when it takes time.

But we need your help. Please take a look at this newsletter and learn about what we are achieving on a very tight budget, and imagine what we can do together to help these kids!

Sincerely,

Conor Grennan
Executive Director
Next Generation Nepal



Conor, Himal, and Sumita outside Dhaulagiri in the sun.

Parents found living in shanty town outside Kathmandu

In between our missions to remote villages searching for parents of trafficked children (which we did with great success in December but which takes a tremendous amount of preparation), NGN has been focusing on finding parents who may be living in the Kathmandu Valley, either inside or outside the city itself. This month we learned that the mothers of two children, Rabin and Chalsing, were living in extreme poverty somewhere outside Kathmandu. (The boys live in our sister orphanage next door, run by The Umbrella Foundation.)



We found the mothers of Rabin and Chalsing living in this shantytown outside Kathmandu.

Even with very little information on their exact whereabouts, my colleague, Farid Ait-Mansour and our Nepali project assistant/ translator CN Amgai, set out to search for them.

They found them. The two mothers were living in a shanty town, among the poorest of the poor. It is a place ridden with disease, where people sort through trash dumps desperate to find anything to recycle and sell. We found the mothers working on the polluted river, where they carried baskets of sand on their backs to make concrete, all for a few rupees per day.

These women, both of whom have had their husbands die in recent years, now struggle mightily just to feed



Residents of the shantytown sifting through a local garbage dump to find recyclables to sell.

themselves, living in houses made of plastic bags held together with bamboo sticks. It is impossible to reunite a child into those conditions. Instead, we are now looking for jobs for the women

that pay a respectable wage, similar to what we did for Krishna Maya, a mother of three (as featured in February's NGN newsletter.) We will try to put each one in a small apartment in Kathmandu (at a cost of about \$30 per month) where her children could live with her. We will support the children's education costs (about \$13 per month for everything from school fees to books to uniforms) and pay for other essentials, like health costs. As the mothers are able to save some money and get back on their feet, we will gradually phase out our financial assistance.

We have proven this model can work, but women like this need help *now*. Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world – we can only break the cycle of poverty one woman at a time. This model of reunification is neither simple nor quick, but it works; it is only a question of resources. Your contribution can directly help these mothers take back their children.



Because they are widows, the children's mothers are forced to do backbreaking work for a few rupees per day to survive.



Two Dhaulagiri children are reintroduced to their mother

Two young brothers living in Dhaulagiri, NGN's children's home, are getting to know their mother for the first time since they can remember.

Akash (6), whom you met in last month's newsletter, and Prakash (8) were separated from their mother two years ago, taken from the village by a man charging the mother extortionate fees even by trafficking standards. As usual, the mother was promised the world: that her children



Akash and Prakash's mother came to visit, and was able to walk her sons to school for the first time.

would be well educated and looked after. Instead, they were dumped in an illegal orphanage while the child trafficker pocketed the money.

The boys' mother eventually learned that her sons had been rescued from destitution and had landed in NGN's children's home. Per our method, we conducted an in-depth interview with her, finding out exactly how her child came to be taken, to whom she gave money, and what was promised.



Now that the mother knows where her sons are, they can begin building a relationship again – a privilege so few trafficked children ever have.

Later, the two boys were thrilled to go home to their village to stay with their mother for one week.

Interviewing parents is the first step in the reunification process. Parents often find us if they can locate the illegal orphanage where their child was dumped. They find the house empty; a neighbor will inform them their child was rescued and brought to us. (These are parents of NGN's children and the other 260 children under the legal guardianship of our wonderful local partner, The Umbrella Foundation.)

The interview is a sensitive process; the parents experience a lot of emotions. They do not understand what is happening with their child; as a result they often lie about the story of the child or their own situation because they are worried they have done something wrong or illegal. We assure them they have not.



Farid and CN (NGN project assistant/ translator) interviewing visiting parents.

The real challenge is that the parents inevitably (and understandably) want to keep their children in our home, knowing their child is safe while they are relatively poor. We understand this instinct, and it poses a difficult moral question for us. However, keeping

the child would completely ignore the most fundamental need: a child's need to grow up with his or her own loving family. We can provide education and health costs for the child to ensure they are safe, healthy, and provided for, but nothing can replace the bond between mother and child.

The case of Akash and Prakash is shaping up to be a success story. We have worked hard to build the trust of the mother. She has become reacquainted with her young sons. And the best news is that with the school year recently ended, she will take her two children for one week back to the village for a holiday. It is a wonderful opportunity to ease the transition for when the children go back to live with her permanently.



Akash, lookin' good.

It underscores why we are so careful in this work and why we must proceed slowly: each case is completely individual and requires different and personalized methodology to reunite children and parents.



How is NGN spending your donation?

At NGN, we never forget that none of this can be done without you! Akash will not eat a single grain of rice, Mamita will not go to one day of school, Karma Lal will not even have a simple pair of shoes unless you help pay for it. It is your money, you've earned it, yet you choose to give it to children you have never met. You have put a huge amount of trust in us.

To maintain this trust, we are obsessed with making sure every single rupee is properly spent and that we are completely transparent about *how* we spend it.

Here is the good news: just four months after welcoming 26 children into our home, we have covered the full cost of the start-up of the house! That means we have covered the cost of buying all carpeting, beds, mattresses, bedding, school books,

notebooks (each child needs up to 12 notebooks for school), school uniforms, shoes, tables, cushions, kitchen equipment for feeding 26 children plus staff, infrastructural improvements to make the house safe for children, clothing costs, medical check-ups after rescuing the children, and so on.

Those set-up costs were substantial and had to be reflected in the cost of caring for the children. But thanks to your generous contributions, we have finally paid off these initial costs. **As a result we are able to substantially reduce the projected cost of caring for a child for one year from \$1000 per year down to \$750!** That \$750 is the bare minimum, but it reflects the *projected direct annual cost* of caring for a child.

To break this down further, and taking the past month as an example, expenses for Dhaulagiri were about \$1600 (there are fluctuations from month to month, i.e., when we need to buy clothes). That amount was split this way: food (32%), house utilities (13%), rent (10%), live-in staff salaries (11%), education (16%), medical (6%), house maintenance (2%), activities (6%), other costs (4%).



Feeding 26 children plus staff accounts for 32% of the budget for the NGN children's home.

It is important to remember, however, that this does not represent NGN's full budget. We also must raise money to carry out missions to find parents in remote regions, plus the costs of running NGN (phone, internet, fundraising, visa costs, etc.).



Krishna Maya is one of our live-in staff members (she is the mother we reunited with her children), and our girls adore her!

Since NGN came into existence in June 2006, neither Farid nor I have taken a salary for this work. It encourages extreme frugality! But you can be sure that in

each donation, large or small, goes to improving the lives of these children who have endured so much at such a young age.



How you are making a difference

It is a full-time job taking care of twenty six children and finding their families; it is also long-term. But that's only part of my job – I also have to find the money to support them. I simply cannot do it alone, so we (the children and I) have to rely on the generosity and compassion of others.

So on behalf of NGN, I would love to say a huge THANK YOU to our New York volunteer staff, Molly Lyons, Joselin Linder, Becky Gordon, Jessica Ricci, and Abby Sher. Abby's comedy group recently did a small benefit for NGN, which sold out! AND also to the initiative of Hannah Maxson, who started the Cornell University chapter of NGN to raise awareness and funds for the kids. AND to David Wood, who with his wife started a small foundation called Kina Social Ventures, will help cover the cost of our live-in tutor and help defray the education costs of the children. AND of course to all of you who have made donations to help the kids!

It is exactly these kinds of initiatives that we so desperately need, and I'm more than happy to coordinate with anyone who might be interested in raising funds and awareness in their communities. We need your help!

For the kids and their parents, your donations are the single most important thing in their lives. Thank you!



The youngest kids of Dhaulagiri

How you can help the kids...

NGN relies solely on donations from the public to support our operations.

We operate on a **tight budget**, but we hope you have seen that a little can go a long way!

Some sample costs:

- Basic **food** for one child for one month: \$20
- Basic **medicine** and hospital check-ups for one month for ten children: \$150
- The **full yearly cost** of supporting a child (including all food, school fees, school books, clothes, medicine, local staff, etc): \$750
- A **four-week mission to find parents** of trafficked children, including airfare to remote regions and local staffing costs: \$2500

There is no minimum or maximum donation – every dollar helps!

Donating is easy and tax-deductible:

Online: Donate securely using your credit card via Paypal by visiting www.nextgenerationnepal.org.

By check: Please make your check payable to “Next Generation Nepal” and mail to:
1 Wing Road
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

Please visit www.nextgenerationnepal.org to learn more about our organization and sample costs, or contact us directly at nextgenerationnepal@gmail.com.

Thank you for your continued support!