



HIMALAYAN CHILDREN'S CHARITIES

The Need

Himalayan Children's Charities was established to address the Nepali orphan crisis through a new paradigm utilizing education, nurturing care, and innovative mentorship, that empowers at-risk children to live lives of dignity, self-sufficiency, and community leadership.

In a society already struggling with extreme poverty and inequality, the Nepali 10-year civil war left a devastating imprint on the country, creating a significant population of orphans and displaced people. This conflict exacerbated the poverty of many rural families, forcing children out of school and into labor to help support their hungry families. In some desperate situations, children were abandoned on roadsides and in orphanages with the hope that someone would take care of them. Unsuspecting parents turned over their children to traffickers pedaling false promises of schooling, creating the infamous “paper orphan” situation. Fake orphanages used children as props to raise “funding” from well-meaning tourists, while the children were used as slave labor. Compounding the issue even further, the devastating earthquakes in 2015 created hundreds more orphans, leaving them traumatized and still living in displacement camps two years later.

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world, and children represent the most vulnerable segment of the population. Problems faced by children, especially from rural areas and marginalized communities, include: child marriage, child labor, trafficking, lack of access to education, and gender and caste discrimination. Nepali children average only 8 years of schooling, and as of 2012, only 25% of children who enroll in the 1st grade successfully complete grade 10¹. Many children are forced to leave school to work and, according to UNICEF, 33.9% of children between the ages of 5-14 are involved in child labor, including in hazardous industries and bonded labor². Additionally, studies by the National Human Rights Campaign, the United Nations, and others estimate that between 10,000 - 20,000 Nepali children are trafficked domestically and abroad for sexual and labor exploitation each year, including to India, China and into Nepal's urban centers^{3,4,5}. Poor children, and especially those who are female, from ethnic minorities, discriminated caste communities, or remote villages, are the most at risk and face the compounding problem of poverty, including lack of basic resources such as potable water, medical services, and quality public education, as well as extreme wealth disparities and strong gender and caste/group biases.

Education and support to children and local communities are vital to raise awareness and help prevent human trafficking, and to shift these vulnerable and at-risk children out of a life of poverty. Recent studies have shown that sponsorship of children in impoverished countries had significant impact on their current lives, their futures and their local communities. Child support through NGO sponsorships significantly increases the years of schooling completed, and the probability and quality of employment. Importantly, “sponsored children exhibit significantly higher levels of self-esteem, aspirations, and self-expectations and lower levels of hopelessness”.⁶

The HCC model serves to fight the crippling grip of extreme poverty and prejudice by providing quality education and mentorship within the structure of a loving family environment. Our programs help shift how at-risk children view themselves, expanding what they believe is possible and affecting what they can achieve. HCC is dedicated to the development of the whole person by: nurturing each child's confidence and understanding of self; exposing them to a diverse cross-section of social strata and career sectors, encouraging them to envision possibilities previously unknown or unavailable to them because of poverty or birth circumstances. Unlike other programs, each student is supported through college or technical degrees, and HCC remains a helpful resource and stable family environment into adulthood. Our graduates give back to the community with a profound sense of gratitude and responsibility. They offer a first-hand perspective and guidance, to diagnose social problems and provide solutions to those in need. Where the world sees an insurmountable crisis, our graduates see potential for a more positive future.

¹ UNESCO & Government of Nepal - Education for All: National Review Report 2001- 2015; ²UNICEF - The State of the World's Children, 2015 Statistical Tables; ³National Human Rights Campaign - Trafficking in Persons Especially on Women and Children in Nepal, 2011 Report; ⁴United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012; ⁵UNICEF Trafficking of Children and Women in Nepal Q&A; ⁶Wydick, B., Glewwe, P. & L. Rutledge (2013) Does International Child Sponsorship Work? A Six-Country Study of Impacts on Adult Life Outcomes. *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 121, pp. 393-436.