

CHILDREN'S HOME PROGRAMME

The Challenge

There are around 30,000 children living on the streets in Nepal. 96% are boys. There are about 350 street children living on the streets of Hetauda, Chitwan and Birgunj with the numbers constantly increasing.

Key facts:

- 80% of the boys living on the streets and 90% of the girls are sexually abused.
- 31% of children aged 5 to 14 are involved in some form of child labour.
- More than 50,000 children die annually in Nepal, with malnutrition as the underlying cause of death in more than 60% of those deaths.
- Only 35% of the population have access to adequate sanitation facilities.
- Half the children in Nepal are underweight
- While its decade-long conflict officially ended in November 2006, the country remains fragile, both politically and economically. One of the consequences of the upheaval has been an increase in the number of children living on urban streets.
- The life of Nepalese street children is so grim that with the little money they make through street-based jobs - rag picking, begging, porting, flower and newspaper selling, street vending and shoe shining - they cannot afford one full meal a day and most of the time they are hungry. It is hunger that adds to their vulnerability and forces them into criminal activities.
- The majority of the street children are addicted to substances like cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana and industrial glue.
- In 2008, the Nepalese government announced that its intention to devise a master plan to rehabilitate street children over five years, through the Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB), an arm of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. Disappointingly, to date there has been no documentation of any progress made. Whilst the CCWB is seeking to address the legal aspects of child rights at a regional and national level, there is no guarantee that legislative reform, in itself, will enable children to recognise and exercise their rights, or encourage individuals and institutions to abide by the law. As such, in the short- to medium-term, Nepali children, especially those living on urban streets, continue to remain acutely vulnerable. This apparent lack of urgency within the CCWB is a driving factor in our expansion plans.



Street children in Chitwan

Our Sansar Children's Home Programme - Background

Our programme focus is in Hetauda, Chitwan and Birgunj, in Nepal, where there are about 350 children living on the streets with no access to shelter or education.

A needs assessment conducted by Our Sansar in 2010/11, revealed that there are hardly any NGOs or governmental agencies working with street children in these cities. There were a few failed attempts to provide amenities for street children, but due to lack of cooperation with local communities the organisations had to close down the homes and now the children are on the streets again.

After extensive consultations with key stakeholders, including local non-governmental organisations, members of the local community and local authorities, Our Sansar proposes to fill this gap in service-provision for street children by opening a shelter home that will also offer education, care and a re-uniting service with the families of the children wherever possible.

In order to avoid the pitfalls faced by organisations proposing to undertake similar ventures in the past, we have secured the buy-in of the local community and other key stakeholders. Their commitment to making this project a success can be gauged by the fact that the local authorities have donated land for a shelter home. The project will be run with a local partner who has experience working with street children, knowledge of the local communities and an active relationship with the police who assist in monitoring the situation. We have selected the partner and are currently undertaking due diligence and drawing up legal formalities - a process we expect to complete shortly.

Activities and services:

- Reuniting the children with their close or extended families when possible. Recent research shows that 95% of street children have families living elsewhere, so we will work closely with the children and their families to successfully reunite them, where this is a desirable option for the welfare of the child.
- Providing the children with shelter, food and education, including skills training so that they can live independent lives in the future. The local Chamber of Commerce in Birgunj is happy to liaise with local businesses and provide internships and work experience leading to future employment for the older children from our home. This way we can ensure our project is sustainable and that the children will not return to the streets.
- Rehabilitation of the children addicted to drugs. We will be taking these children into our home and together with our local partners which run rehabilitation centres for drug addicted children in Kathmandu, we will provide them with specialist care
- Providing counselling. Through links with local organisations we will provide trained staff including psychologists and social workers, to ensure the children get adequate support
- Our Sansar's local staff will be responsible for implementing the project on the ground, monitoring the progress and supervising the funding



Solution - Building Children's Homes

The homes will provide:

- Shelter
- Food
- Education
- Counselling
- Linking with close or extended families
- Skills training and internships with local companies for older children

A local partner, NYC, has given Our Sansar a building to use for free with no time limits for the first children's home in Birgunj. It received funding to build a large building for a different project, however the funding stopped and NYC was forced to pay for security guards for a building that it was not using. The building has got 12 large bedrooms and a large outside space where we will be able to grow our own vegetables and keep goats for milk.



The home is initially housing 10 children, and will be reuniting many more with their families, and an evaluation will be done after one year to see what expansion is needed. There are three live-in staff members, and two security guards.

Within three years we will open two transit homes in other areas of Nepal, and after that time we plan to establish more transit homes nationwide, with a permanent home based in Birgunj to ensure we reach a maximum number of street children. Transit homes will provide first response to the children's needs and each child will be approached on an individual basis. In some cases the transit home will act as a drop in centre providing counselling, food, education, and in some cases they will provide shelter, training, linking with the families or referrals to the permanent home or other organisations that might be able to help the children in a better way (for example drug rehabilitation centres).

For further information contact Our Sansar at info@oursansar.co.uk or visit the Our Sansar website at www.oursansar.org.