

# WELCOME TO OUR

  

# SELF-SUSTAINING ORPHAN CHILDREN HOME MODEL

## INTRODUCTION:

This manual is to help you understand  
our philosophy of

***“Give the Net, not the Fish”***

We ask that you read this fully and give your attention for some minutes while drinking a nice cup of Chiya (Nepali tea).

We hope you get inspired and you feel welcome!

*If after reading you find yourself touched and inspired or simply curious, then wonderful, stay and enjoy your time! However, if after reading you feel you don't agree or want us to be different, then we thank you for your short visit and hope you find what you are seeking in another children home.*

*Please, as you read, and if you have ideas try to put them aside for a moment and be fresh and open, simply hear us as we are.*

Read on...

## THE NAME, THE PRINCIPLE:

As you will read in each of our Home's name we consciously place the words '**Self-Sustaining Children Home**', this is to identify that our basic principle is to help ourselves be independent and self-sustaining in the long-term. We may ask you for support for financial capital to achieve our goal of being self-sustaining, but we don't wish to be endlessly dependant on donors.

As our catch phrase states "**Give the Net, not the Fish**" – we want you to help us buy, develop and use **the Net**, so we can make our own income source, provide our own food sources – catching **our own Fish!**

## WHY THIS PHILOSOPHY?

We are Nepalese, our children are Nepalese – we wish to retain and honour our basic culture. We are intelligent, creative and willing to work hard to achieve a happy, fulfilling life. We wish that our homeless children will grow up in a natural environment, understanding their own culture, their roots - and more importantly, developing life skills, knowledge and peer friendship bonds that will help them their entire life.

**This Self-Sustaining model "Give the Net, not the Fish" was created by Dipendra K.C. & Kira Kay and supported by various friends after witnessing many problems in the traditional donor model children orphanages.**

### Problems such as:

1. Lack of healthy integration of children in the long-term.
2. Corruption and misuse of donor funds.
3. Interruption or loss of donor funds causing financial crisis and hardship.
4. Creation of unhealthy dependant and imbalanced relationships on foreigners.
5. High financial stress situations and consequent bad judgments.

Giving money, clean beds and food does not give us all that we need to live a healthy life. We also require self-esteem, understanding of our history, our culture, we need to be able to relate directly with our peers in the village, to speak fluently in both Nepali and English. We wish to feel that we are integrated with, and a part of, our Nepali culture. Plus develop balanced, healthy and long-lasting friendships with our international friends.

The basic principle of this model offers many healthy collaborative aspects involving the local community, international donors, volunteers (both Nepali and International) and presents a real alternative to the traditional institutional orphanages generally operated in Nepal.

- **Note:** *the government of Nepal does not financially support orphanages. It does now have a Child Welfare agency that registers, monitors and audits orphanages.*

## HOW OUR MODEL WORKS:

***The simple version is here – for full and complete details please read till end of Manual for further details.***

**Step 1:** Form a committee from the designated local village and register the Children Home with appropriate government authority. Choose from committee key mentors to oversee the daily functioning of the home.

**Step 2:** Acquire land and house. Buy essential living items (beds, kitchen, clothes, school)

**Step 3:** Choose reliable empathetic women as carers who have also been disadvantaged

(e.g. husbands died or left) and begin to accept children into the home. No more than 10 children within the first year, and a maximum of 25 children after completion of third year.

**Step 4:** Cultivate land for vegetables and develop animal stock (chickens, cows, goats) to provide food for all children and carers.

**Step 5:** Develop additional income source with some business that is integrated with the home, the village and the culture (for example, chicken farm, fish farm, sewing house, honey production, mushroom growing)

**Step 6:** Encourage education sponsorship of all children so that they receive the best education possible.

**Step 7:** Continue day-to-day providing for ourselves and developing healthy relationships in all directions long-term.

## WHAT WE WOULD LIKE FROM YOU:

If you are reading this manual then you are visiting our Home or you have been given this by a friend who has.

We do want to develop healthy friendships and relationships with our international visitors. So here are some tips on what can be of great benefit to support and help us get along well together.

1. Firstly, please remember you are in a Nepali village and the conditions of this home are well above the 'normal' standard in the village. If you wish, ask the President to introduce you to the village and see for yourself the general living/sleeping/toilet standards.
2. If you have suggestions you think may be of help or benefit, great, we really appreciate this, but please talk with us and invite our opinion and please accept our final decision on the matter if we do not agree with you.
3. Please respect that the President is the senior authority in the home and is legally the guardian of children - if there is any complaints or other suggestions please communicate this to her or him. The live-in carers/mothers do wonderful hard work but they do not have authority for main decisions so please do not ask them to do so.

4. If you are a male, please note we may ask you to retire early to your homestay/volunteer accommodation in our 'all women' homes. This is in respect of the reputation and honour of the women, which is very important in our community and villages. We also ask that single men do not escort the women outside of the home without the president, as it could compromise the women's reputation, and [especially not on the back of a motorcycle].
5. Our lifestyle is simple and healthy, we appreciate your standards are different and your culture is also. Sometimes we can very much benefit from your suggestions and sometimes you might perhaps benefit from ours!
6. It is quite normal in our culture for children (& often adults of same sex) to sleep in the same bed. This helps for both warmth and a heartfelt sense of human companionship that is important to us.
7. If you are sleeping over, we do ask that you rise at or before 7am, this is to give the children a good example. If this is not possible for you then perhaps you would be best to stay at a local hotel and come and visit us as often as you wish and join us for meals.
8. We generally eat with our hands, we can also use spoons and forks, but for us the food tastes better when we eat in our traditional style with our right hand. We will always provide you with a spoon, but maybe you might like to try our style sometime for yourself!
9. Generally in Nepali culture full bathing is with cold water and is done once per week or every few days, not like in the western culture of bathing every day. Here at the home we have a full shower, also with hot water (only 10-15% of Nepali's have hot water) that we use for the benefit of the children, but we do not require them to bath every day. Although they do face wash, brush teeth and wash hands every day.
10. We have the traditional water toilets, please if you wish to use toilet paper or have any tampon/sanitary pad please do not place in the toilet but place in the rubbish bin, this will then be burnt for disposal.
11. In the kitchen we have a special water filter to provide healthy and clean water for everyone in the home. Water from the other taps should not be consumed for drinking as unfortunately we do have many water borne diseases in Nepal.
12. If you wish to buy the children a treat, best to consult with the President first. Generally we prefer, fruit, dried fruit, juices – healthier oriented snacks rather than chocolate or biscuits.
13. We are all Hindu religion, please respect our morning meditation and yoga as part of our customs – you are welcome to join us!
14. We do have a TV and the children have designated times for watching, please do not allow them to watch outside of this without consulting us.

15. We prefer if you are to bring or purchase games that you choose interactive ones e.g., balls, badminton or teaching games/puzzles. Please do not bring electronic games such as 'game boy' or 'x-box', this is not helpful in a larger children community like ours.
16. Be aware of your position. Nepali people are very polite and tend to look up to you. So when you ask them something they are not likely to say No. So be sensitive in what you ask since it can be difficult for us Nepali's to openly disagree with you.

#### **WHAT WE DON'T WANT:**

1. Decisions and actions taken about the home without consulting us, including disciplining children.
2. Criticisms about how we are operating or treating the children before you have really explored our local culture.
3. Forcing your opinion and ideas when we don't agree.
4. Taking the children out anywhere without consulting and informing the President.
5. Buying of any items (clothing, for the house or otherwise) without checking with us first.
6. Giving the children money or sweets and chocolates without consulting us.

#### **EDUCATION:**

With respect to education we attempt where possible to send the children to private schools. This applies for children 3yrs and older. More expensive than the government schools, the level of the curriculum is substantially higher in the private school. Additionally the level of English language, as well as Nepali language, is much better. With a better quality education the children have a much higher potential to obtain their SLC (equivalent of year 10 certificate) termed the 'Iron Gate,' only about 20% of government school students gain this certification verses 75% of private school students. The SLC certificate also enables the children to further education and the option of tertiary education. For the younger children, from 3yrs – 5yrs, they attend the local nursery/kindergarten joined with the school. Primary activities include playing, games, afternoon naps, beginning use of pencils/paper/paint etc. They attend from 9.30am till 1 or 2pm. To pay for the private education we seek sponsors for the children, specifically for the purpose of paying the school fees, books, exam fees, school outings, and school meals. Sponsorship for the children is 450 Euro per year. School days start approximately 9 or 10am and conclude at 3 or 4pm. The discussion on education in Nepal warrants a whole article itself!

Sponsorship can offer you and the child a gift of connection – you can write directly to the child and she/he can feel the support directly. (The older children are able to correspond back by letters although this is sometimes complicated with not all sponsors

writing some children like to write back some do not.) This gives you the opportunity to really experience the difference you can make by helping one person. It also gives the child the opportunity to have a friend who cares about their future and well being – this is particularly significant as the children grow older and begin to make longer term choices in their lives.

## **HEALTH CARE:**

In terms of health care – each village has a local health post, often in close proximity of the home. This is the first place to take the child, secondly is the local hospital, which may be a further distance. The President will make the decision case by case and with the support of the local medical personnel as to what action to take. In the case of major illnesses, for example in two situations we had children who had heart defects, and required surgery, this requires detailed investigations and discussions. In this situation additional funds are sought from donors to pay for the medical costs involved. In some instances we have now developed healthy relationship with significant hospitals that offer excellent support in medical emergencies.

With **Dental Health** we now have two overseas volunteer dental medical teams who include our children homes on their yearly visits to Nepal. Every child receives a check-up and any necessary dental work, plus the teams provide quality toothbrushes and toothpaste that lasts for some months! They also attend the house ‘mothers’ free of charge.

## **INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS:**

Overseas volunteers have now become a frequent part of the homes, with each home having a dedicated Home Stay for such volunteers. Each volunteer undergoes an exploratory interview conducted by phone before their application is accepted, plus they must give a police clearance from their country of residence (to ensure we do not accept any known sex offenders). Additionally, once in Nepal, the volunteer undergoes 1-3 day’s orientation that gives a short overview of the language, culture and customs of Nepal.

Generally we only accept volunteers for a minimum of 3 weeks to give both the volunteer and the children some continuity. The President of the home acts as the liaison for the volunteer and gives them the ‘in house’ orientation once they arrive and introduces the children and daily routines. The volunteer will then join the house ‘mother’s’ in their day-to-day activities, with extra attention being given to homework support and playing/human contact. Often the international volunteers develop a longer-term relationship with the home, frequently sponsoring a child or providing a needed item of capital for the home (e.g. solar panel, washing machine, rice cooker).

Please note, if you are a single male wanting to volunteer, we may ask you to abide by certain restrictions, such as retiring to your room early, not taking out our girls or mothers without another adult. This is to respect the integrity and honour of our women and girls in our culture, we thank you for your understanding.

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

With this model, the basic food production coming directly from the land of the home creates a basis of healthy food for the children. Fresh vegetables from the garden plot and regular protein from eggs and chicken meat, milk and curd from the cows all provide a balanced diet for the children. A balance that is readily accessible, without having to make cash purchases.

This makes for a 'home' environment for the children to grow in and develop, where they learn basic life skills. It also generates a sustainable basic income for the home. Generally it takes 6-8 years to fully establish a reliable income generating business at the home and until now we have not attained 100% self-sustaining however we have made considerable progress.

Some examples of income production are:

- Selling excess of milk from buffalo/cows
- Selling eggs/chickens
- Seasonable vegetables selling
- Mushroom production
- Honey production
- Fish farming
- Sewing house

This model creates a less donor dependent relationship and supports empowerment for all involved – including the donors!

## **FURTHER DETAILED EXPLANATION ON 'HOW IT WORKS'**

*For those who wish to further understand how and why we use this model*

### **We currently have 3 Homes under the auspices of this model**

(Annapurna – Pokhara/Kaski District; Bhaktapur – Sipadol/Bhaktapur District; Angels – Talarang/Sindhupalchok District)

The initial step is that we develop a committee of seven Nepali persons to form the legal association for the Children Home and register the name and purpose with the appropriate government agency. This committee is from the local Nepali village and some of them serve as daily mentors and practical local volunteer support. This directly involves the local community, which is both necessary and very supportive for the long-term development and integration of the children.

Next, donors (international & Nepali) provide the start-up capital to establish the home (to accommodate up to 20-30 children – first step 10 children and rising up to maximum of 20 after second year adding children slowly to integrate them and over time further additions if our Home and circumstances can provide). Then we involve women who are also in need (e.g. women whose husbands have died or left them) to be full-time, live-in carers/workers of the Home.

Land for the growing of vegetables and livestock to produce food and an income is acquired. Generally we choose land that has at least a basic house structure and preferably also livestock accommodation. Capital is also required to upgrade and develop the premises to accommodate our purpose. Essential items such as beds, bedding, kitchen equipment, storage bins, clothing, school uniforms, books etc, are purchased.

Next, once the premises and basic people have been brought together we then register at the local police station and hospital, advising them that we are set-up and ready to receive appropriate children. Also we register with the District level Child Welfare agency that oversees any child orphanages and conducts yearly audits and spontaneous visits/checks. They will bring us children, some may be complete orphans (both mother and father dead) some may be partial orphans, meaning one parent dead and the other not able to care for the child, abandoned children, children of handicapped or very sick parent(s) or children of incest or rape scenarios.

Once the children arrive, they are cared for, nurtured, clothed and brought into the 'home' environment. They are introduced to their new brothers and sisters and all women in the home become 'mothers', if the President is a man then he is the 'father' (or in most cases the husband of the president serves this role). The background and remaining family members of the child is noted and recorded as is any special needs. In some situations the child may need medical treatment for some time, and often-extra tuition is required for schooling as many come from very difficult backgrounds.

The primary day-to-day care of the children is the responsibility of the live-in 'mothers'. The President who already has good experience in their own family and community supervises these women. The President also refers to other members of the committee as needed, as well as having the benefit of consulting and guidance from Kira Kay, who regularly visits the home for general overseeing.

The day-to-day care involves basics such as the preparing and cooking of meals, helping with bathing of the children and general toileting, dressing and clothing, and generally looking after the health of the children on a daily basis. For example, if a child has a cold, looking to see if he/she needs medication or some other extra attention. Additionally the mothers provide the companionship – hugs, laughter, playing, helping with homework. They also oversee sleeping and wakeup time and ensuring that the children arrive to and from school safely. Additionally they also play a role with basic discipline when required. For example, with 20-25 children different relationship dynamics arise as with most families and consequent upsets, arguments that need to be tended to. For the very young (babies up to 3/4yrs) additional care is offered – for example the women carry the babe as she would her own child in a wrap on the back as she goes about her daily tasks, plus in the evenings the babes sleep with the mother - so the child has a relatively 'normal' contact with a 'mother' as he/she would in the village. This aspect of care is considered a natural function of their day-to-day tasks by the mother and performed without any set protocol, yet relying on the innate cultural norm. Mothering and caring for young children is strongly a cultural norm in Nepal, with young children caring for the siblings in various ways from very young.

If there is a particular problem or issue arising – for example, an unresolved issue between the children, or a child becoming more ill – then the President will intervene and decide what course of action needs to be taken. Generally the President spends



several hours of the day at the home, most days of the week (in some situations the President also lives within the home), supervising and providing guidance on both the care of the children and the practical functions of the home. The President will also make the decisions on what crops to plant and when, how/when to harvest, as well as decisions relating to animal care and breeding. The President does not have, or receive any specific training, however they are chosen with care prior to the home being established on the basis of proven life experience and references from the local community and elders. We do seek persons who have obviously demonstrated compassion and desire for a long-term commitment.

The house 'mothers' and the President work together in the daily functional practical tasks of tending crops, animals and whatever income producing industry is set up. Also in the general cleaning of the house, washing of clothes and overall maintenance. If needed they will employ additional labour and tutors. The children often learn by association and following along before and after school, as they would in an ordinary village life situation, with the older children helping with various chores. For example the children might collect the eggs, carry the firewood in to the kitchen, sweep the floor, help younger children get dressed. We also see this as a natural development of autonomy, that the children have the opportunity to evolve life skills and social behaviours at their own pace.

Generally the first to fourth years of the Home's evolution is very much involved with setting up the day-to-day functions, establishing the basic food sources and developing unity between the children, the mothers and the school environment. From the end of the fourth year more focus of time and capital resources is directed towards establishing a reliable and long-term sustainable income-producing source.

In respect of the income producing function for the home, this is determined and decided by the President. Frequently the President will have consulted with Kira and main capital donors, also with other people in the village to gain ideas and suggestions. Once a plan has been developed this will then be implemented step by step by the President and will usually involve the housemothers in some form as well as often employing additional labour from the local village. We particularly have noticed and very much encouraged the creativity of the President – this person will be the main implementer of the self-sustaining elements, and in our experience by supporting their creativity this then leads to success and natural motivation that includes everyone involved. We see this as an important key for the home's development, that the President is very much the initiator of the self-sufficiency aspects of the home and thus finding natural empowerment from this leadership. Something that the children can also gain from by witnessing and being around, much like having the example of an innovative mother or father that they look up to.

We hope that each home in the longer-term is able to create a healthy independent income; this then can be used for any future development or expansions as the children grow and perhaps even contribute to college or technical education for the children after their basic schooling.

***Thank you for taking the time to fully read this manual, we hope that it has added to your understanding of what we are doing. Enjoy your stay and your experiences with us!***