



SPECIAL FALL EDITION

It's All Happening in Nepal and We Were There!



Hallie Tamez in Simikot, Humla

Dear Friends,

There has been a hiatus in our communications this summer but no pause in our hard work in Nepal. There is so much in store for you including a brand new website coming in mid November, the publication of NGN founder Conor Grennan's book *Little Princes, One Man's Promise to Bring Home the Lost Children of Nepal*, January 25, 2011, and this newsletter chock full of exciting stories of a very special visit to Nepal!

A few weeks ago the NGN U.S. team—Conor, Director of Communications Larry Closs and me—headed to Nepal. Conor was there to revisit the people and places that launched the beginnings of NGN and most importantly to see the heroes of *LITTLE PRINCES*, the original real-life children who lived in the Little Princes home where Conor first volunteered in Nepal. Larry Closs was there as his shadow, to capture it all on video to share with the world. I was there in my leadership role working with staff and partners in Nepal and gaining new insights and organizational connections that will sustain and increase the impacts of our efforts. All this when I was not acting as production assistant of course!

Read on about one young man who has benefited from NGN's support and is now giving back to his rural village in Humla. Catch a glimpse of the kids reacting to the story of their lives chronicled in *Little Princes* while Conor and Larry marvel along with them. Learn about The Wizard of NGN in Nepal, our country director Julien Lovera. And finally, follow 25 children as they head home with their families for Dashain armed with new sneakers and a tube of toothpaste for the journey.

These stories are not miracles, they all happen because of you. Please consider becoming a sustaining donor of NGN and help the children of Nepal return home.

Sincerely,

Hallie Tamez

Hallie Tamez

Executive Director



Next Generation Nepal

Small Library Comes to Humla: School Children in France Help Make it Possible

By Santosh Karki



I am Santosh Karki (not real name). I have been living at NGN's Karnali house in Kathmandu since 2007. This year, during Dashain, the biggest yearly festival for Hindus, I am going to visit my village and bring some books for the village library project that I am establishing.

Dashain lasts 15 days and I will utilize all of them for this project. I have gathered about 65 books with the help of children from a school in France. They collected donations and provided me with the exact budget I required.

It will take about a week to reach my village in Humla with the books. I don't know whether this project will succeed but trying to do something is better than not. Don't you think so?

Anyway, everything was managed with the help of Julien brother (NGN Country Director) and Farid brother (Karya, France). I want to thank them and those who helped to collect the budget.

You know, this is not MY project only; it belongs to ALL of us.

Thank you,
Santosh Karki

Unscripted: Cameras Rolling in Nepal

By Larry Closs

"Just say 'Namaste!'" I instructed.

The kid standing in front of my video camera stared at me, not sure where to look, not sure who was supposed to be the recipient of his "Namaste!"

A half-dozen other kids were gathered around, tentatively keeping their distance at first and then crowding in next to me when they noticed the kid in front of the camera displayed on the LCD view screen. Several moments passed before one of them understood.

"Movie camera!" he yelled triumphantly, gently pushing the first kid out of the way, looking straight into the lens and delivering the requested line. Immediately after, he ran around behind the camera and watched anxiously as I hit *Rewind* and then *Play*.

A collective "Ahhhhhh!" erupted and within seconds each of the kids was scrambling for their close-up.

I was in Simikot, the rugged and extremely remote village headquarters of Humla district in far northwestern Nepal, visiting Next Generation Nepal's recently constructed Karnali House for trafficked children. I had come to document the return of NGN founder Conor Grennan to the area where, in 2006, he trekked for miles through the Himalayas to locate the parents of 18 children living in Kathmandu who were presumed to be orphans but turned out to be victims of trafficking.

My assignment was simple enough: Shadow Conor. Keep my video and digital cameras trained on him and capture his thoughts and reactions as he saw the kids he had rescued for the first time in four years and visited the transitional home managed by the organization he had founded. Now, as a journalist, I try to stick to the



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sidelines, stay out of the way, cover the story and not become a part of it. But somewhere in between racing across dirt runways to catch beat-up old prop planes with worn leather seats right out of *Lost Horizon*, shooting an interview with Conor on a huge pile of rocks with the highest mountains on earth soaring in the background and eating generous portions of dal bhat twice a day, I fell in love with the kids, just as Conor had years earlier, and it became impossible not to want to play with them with the only toy I had with me—my “movie camera.”



Larry interviews Conor in high Himalaya

Whether we were re-enacting scenes from Conor’s forthcoming book, *Little Princes*, filming a few of the youngest kids directing a pair of oxen as they plowed a potato field, capturing the construction of kites from old newspapers and broom straws or just saying “Namaste!”, the kids couldn’t wait to see the results, watching themselves in disbelief with an awestruck intensity and then shouting ecstatically. These are kids who very rarely catch a glimpse of themselves. Many things had changed in Nepal since my first trip in 2003—cell phones were commonplace, so was wifi—but, as was the case seven years earlier, mirrors were still almost non-existent. Outside of a hotel, you had to look long and hard to find one, and at the Karnali House in Simikot, there was, in fact, only one—a small hand-held mirror closely guarded by one of the girls. So, for nearly

all of the Karnali House kids, seeing themselves on video was beyond anything they could ever have imagined.



Men in the mountains

One of my favorite moments was an interview I shot between Conor and Bishnu, the last in a group of seven trafficked children to be rescued in 2006. In response to Conor’s questions about what it felt like to be back home in Humla, Bishnu could barely get two words out without bursting into laughter. When the three of us watched the playback together, Bishnu lost control entirely, repeatedly doubling over at the sight of himself and shrieking with pure joy. It was completely contagious and Conor and I couldn’t stop laughing either. I only wished I had a second video camera to capture that moment, too.

Larry Closs is NGN’s director of communications.

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Going Home:

New Shoes and a Tube of Toothpaste

By Hallie Tamez



Imagine mobilizing 25 children for a journey on foot for up to three days through the rugged mountains of the high Himalaya. A mastery of planning, logistics and

parental love made this vision a reality in Simikot, Humla, at the start of Dashain. The largest Hindu holiday on the calendar, Dashain (mid Oct.) marks a 15-day celebration of family and worship. What better way for the children under our care in Simikot to further their reintegration to rural home life than going home to their villages for Dashain.



A family heads home for Dashain

I spent a week at the children’s home recently, and each morning we gathered in anticipation as families and relatives arrived on foot from distant villages to collect their children, chat with the staff and warm themselves over steaming cups of tea and biscuits in preparation for the return journey home.

By week’s end, all 25 children had been greeted at the house by parents or relatives, were given a new pair of sneakers and tube of toothpaste as a parting gift and with blessings for a safe journey disappeared into the mountains on their journey home.

I still marvel at the image of a child as young as seven or eight shouldering a small backpack, lacing up new sneakers and boldly skipping down the rocky rutted path behind a mother or father as they begin a very long journey home. The idea that walking through the mountains for hours or days is commonplace and accepted by everyone young and old in rural Nepal continues to astonish and amaze. The strength and stamina of the children and families remains a solid image of the strength and stamina of Nepal.



Father and son enjoy cup of tea before journey home

The departure to “their homes” represented a very important goal for NGN. We successfully brought these children back to Humla from Kathmandu and now our mission is to reintegrate them into the daily lives of their families. These children need to be learning about life with their families and we need to see that they get there safely and with the necessary support. This will take our expertise and your dollars. Please become a part of this story and help us bring home the lost children of Nepal.

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The Wizard of NGN in Nepal: Julien Lovera, Country Director

Interview by Jillian Dunham

Julien Lovera moved to Nepal in 2008 to volunteer with NGN and became the organization's Country Director in April 2009. He was trained in social work at the Regional Institution of Social Work at Montpellier and worked at Organization L'enfance Catalane, in Perpignan City. A native of Ales, Julien gave this interview in English, which he learned along with Nepali after beginning work with NGN. We chose to transcribe in his voice.



The Wizard of NGN Julien Lovera, Country Director (with Hallie)

What first brought you to Nepal?

In 2008, I was a social worker. In France I was working on issues of child protection. I had this feeling that I needed to go and explore other countries, other places, and explore new issues with children. And I've had a tradition with the mountains, of course, in Nepal. My father is just crazy of mountains, and through his education and passion I got the same feeling for all these mystic mountains of Nepal.

That is why I wanted to continue my involvement with children, but in a different place. I wanted to do it in Nepal.

What made you stay?

The children, of course. I spent nine months with them, sharing their daily lives, sharing everything with them and sharing their personal stories. I have been in the field with them and their families and I felt a really strong link with the children. I wanted to stay—I couldn't move—once you know them, you need to stay. Children are the main reason why I stayed here, but also NGN, what we are doing, the importance of the family that NGN gives and the quality of the staff. I really believe in NGN's projects. Sometimes the smile of Ramraj can be enough to motivate me for a long while.

After changing your role from volunteer to country director and performing that job for almost a year, what has been the hardest part for you?

The hardest part is to control emotions. The emotions you can leave in the field with families. Because even if most of the time we have just a wonderful time here with the children, with families in Humla, with families in the field, the most challenging part is to accept all of the suffering. We can see, we can hear, and sometimes doubt, sometimes doubt.

But when you know the feeling to find a family for a child living five, six years in Kathmandu and you arrive in the village and you show a picture to the father, to the mother, and when they say, "Ah! It's my son, I recognize him, it's my son," we can suffer—we can feel suffering.

Do you think other groups in the child welfare sector in Nepal are starting to notice the goals and projects of NGN and that it is making a difference?

I think that we getting an influence now. We are listened to by other organizations and NGOs (non-governmental organizations). We were able to build a lot of partnerships this year. The situation is changing even on



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the authority side—we can see that the fight concerning the place of the family within child development is changing. Yes, I think things are improving.

NGN focuses most of its energy on the importance of a child's original community and their family in their life and the importance of this in their development. In your experience could you talk about the importance of those two things to a child growing up—their family and their community?

It is really hard for me to compare what I know from France and what I know from Nepal but the only thing I am sure is that the education—I mean the education given by the family for children—is critical.

What I would say, it is classic but... it's just impossible to know where we want to go if we do not know where we come from. A lot of children here, they forgot their language, they forgot the name of their parents, the name of their village. They just don't know anything about their own story, about their own life, their roots. I think that without these teachings, without this education, this family education, it is just impossible for children to build their life in a secure way, with strong feelings of safety and self-confidence.

Vulnerability to trafficking and kids being separated from families has a lot to do with desire for education or safety or perhaps parents' perceptions of life in Kathmandu—what needs to be done to help parents keep their children at home, or to change people's minds?

In the short term, I think that the only way to do it efficiently is awareness, prevention and education. Because all of these families—they had a dream when they sent their children to Kathmandu. They had just good intentions. They had just good hope and this dream, this really strong dream to give a bright future to their children. At first, we have to explain to these families what happens to these hundreds of children who live in the district who disappear in India or foreign

countries, prostitution and all kinds of trafficking. We have to raise awareness in Humla. It's a first step. It's a huge job because it is sometimes hard to gain their trust. When we arrive in the village, sometimes it's difficult to get their trust. We have to inform them. But in the long term, the middle term, the best job we could do is to improve the facilities, education, food, health and maybe this time parents won't see the best is abroad with strangers.

What gives you hope about the future in Nepal?

The main thing that gives me hope is to see how our kids think already about their district and the way to support by themselves and their community in the future. NGN, Terre des Hommes and others organizations that strongly believe it's possible to change the situation in this country and seeing committed people as our staff—like our field director Sundup Lama and our field assistant, Samjyor Lama—is also for me a great source of hope for the future. Nepal needs this type of guy: honest, and committed to develop the future.

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Introducing LITTLE PRINCES to the Little Princes

By Conor Grennan

After thirty hours of travel, it's hard to be in a chipper mood getting off the plane in Kathmandu. Unless, that is, you have a half dozen kids that you've known for six years all cheering for you as if Bono had just entered the room.

I was incredibly excited and somewhat apprehensive about seeing the kids this time. I recently wrote a book called *Little Princes*, which is the story of my time in



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Nepal and the beginnings of Next Generation Nepal. It's published by HarperCollins and will be coming out January 25th, 2011. The stars of that book, of course, are the kids of the children's home (all pseudonyms for privacy). When the advance copies came out this summer, I sent them one hot off the presses.

I was nervous about how the kids would take it. Few people like being written about, because somebody else is controlling their story. When I saw the kids, I wondered what they thought.

I didn't have long to wait. They immediately started discussing it in detail. They loved it! They filled in additional facts that I'd left out in the anecdotes and stories I told in book. Mostly, though, they were so proud that their story was being told.



Introducing *LITTLE PRINCES* to *little princes*

Not surprisingly, they have no idea how big this thing is. I didn't tell them about the advance copies, or that HarperCollins is doing a first run of 200,000 copies, or that it is being translated into eight or nine languages and that I'll be on a nationwide radio and TV tour in three months. The kids wouldn't really comprehend that. But they understand that we're trying to help more kids like them, and they recognize their central role in that mission. I couldn't be prouder of them.

Just a few months ago, the NGN team opened a home in Simikot, Nepal, the district headquarters of Humla. Twenty five children are now back in their culture, in their home region, going to school, and visiting their parents. As bold as this move was, and we are one of the few organizations successfully working to get children home, this is only the beginning. Our dream is that this home will be a transition home, to enable trafficked and displaced children to readapt to their the communities after years in Kathmandu, and, ultimately, go home to their own villages and families.

That takes monitoring, it takes additional staff and it takes resources to support local schools so that the children can continue their education. And that requires financial resources, which can only come from you, choosing to support our work.

To say thank you to our donors, between now and January 25, 2011 we will be sending an autographed advance copy of *Little Princes* to anyone who donates \$200 or more to Next Generation Nepal. We appreciate your support—you continue to make all this happen.

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**Little Princes:
One Man's Promise to
Bring Home the Lost
Children of Nepal**

On sale January 25, 2011

Don't miss it!

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Next Generation Nepal

You Can Help Bring Home the Lost Children of Nepal

Visit our website at www.nextgenerationnepal.org to make a donation.

YES! I want to help NGN prevent child trafficking in Nepal and reconnect children with their families.

Please consider joining us by making a tax deductible gift of:

\$ 100 Friend \$500 Supporter \$ 1000 Sustainer \$5000 Champion Other \$_____

Where your dollars go:

\$50 covers the cost of searching for one family in remote areas.

\$150 educates a child for one full year.

\$1000 feeds 30 children for a year

\$1000 supports teacher training and literacy development in village school

\$ 3000 pays rent on children's home for a year.

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

Next Generation Nepal is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization in the State of New York.

Thank you for your continued support!