

Promise, Potential and the future of NGN



Photo: Larry Closs

Communicating news and information is a tricky balance. Like the dilemma in Goldilocks and the Three Bears, sometimes it's too much, sometimes too little and sometimes just right. We're striving for just right and would love to hear from you about how often you'd like to receive news from NGN and in what format—a quarterly newsletter like this one, timely email updates, etc. We'd also like to know your thoughts on the stories we bring you. What do you like to read? What grabs your attention and helps inform you about

NGN? What else would you like to hear about? Please take a moment to send your comments, questions or suggestions on improving our communications with you. Email your thoughts directly to me at: <mailto:hallie@nextgenerationnepal.org>

With sincere thanks and gratitude,

Hallie Tamez
Executive Director
Next Generation Nepal

Return to Nepal: There and Back Again

By Farid Ait-Mansour



Photo: Hallie Tamez

In October 2004, after working for two years with handicapped adults and children with social issues in France, I left my job, got a passport and set out to explore new cultures and lifestyles. Two months later, I ended up living with 18 orphans in the Little Princes Children's Home in Godawari, Nepal. There I met fellow volunteer Conor Grennan.

As chronicled in Conor's book, "[Little Princes](#)," we eventually uncovered an enormous truth: The children in our care were not orphans at all but victims of a trafficker who had promised rural parents living in fear of Maoist rebels during Nepal's 10-year civil war that he would take their children to the safety of a boarding school in the country's capital for a fee. In reality, the trafficker took the money and ran, leaving the children destitute on the streets of Kathmandu or exploiting them commercially as beggars, slaves, prostitutes or candidates for international adoption.

The realization decimated me. Unfortunately, my visa was about to expire, leaving me no choice but to return to France, where I created a charity, [Karya](#). At the same time, Conor returned to the United States to create Next Generation Nepal. Both organizations were dedicated to protecting trafficked children while we searched for their families and began the process of reconnection.

After much discussion online, Conor and I returned to Nepal and, for one year, I acted as Program Director of Next Generation Nepal while Conor became the Country Director. At the end of the year, Conor decided to go back to live in the United States with Liz, the woman he met and fell in love with in Nepal.

I took over his position as Country Director a few months later, until December 2008, when I decided to leave Nepal. In the extreme situations we encountered every day, where there are no easy solutions, emotions can often trump the professionalism required to achieve our goals. I realized I needed training and so I enrolled in the Institut Bioforce Development, an international humanitarian school based in France.

In 2011, I achieved a Masters degree in Coordination of Humanitarian Projects and I have just returned to Nepal as NGN's new Country Director, replacing Julien Lovera, who worked tirelessly for the past three years to reconnect children in NGN's care with their families. My goal is to increase NGN's impact in Nepal and to restore the dignity lost to trafficked children when they are displaced. They have the right to be raised by their parents, in their community, with their traditions and culture.

The Promise of Technology in Nepal

By Hallie Tamez



Photo: Hallie Tamez

I clutched the sticky door handle of the incredibly smelly taxi as we careened through the chaotic streets of Kathmandu, passing uncomfortably close to random rickshaws, roaming crowds, aggressive fruit vendors and wandering cows feasting on steaming mounds of garbage. I was making my way out of the city, energized by the anticipation of an adventurous visit to a small school in the rural district of Kavre.

Suddenly, however, I was gripped with dread. In my haste, I had forgotten my filtered water bottle—essential travel equipment in Nepal, particularly when heading off for a long day in a remote location. Several hours later, as I found myself struggling to help push the taxi out of a ditch on a road that barely qualified as one, I could only tell myself, over and over, “Just swallow your saliva!” But by that point, I didn’t have any saliva to swallow and I desperately needed something to drink. As we abandoned the taxi and walked the remaining dusty distance on foot, I caved and reluctantly accepted an offer of local water, trying not to imagine the after-effect. I’ll leave that to your own imagination.

I will say that what I discovered in the classrooms at the end of the goat path made me forget my subsequent stomach disruptions. The small Nabin Primary School offered inspiring evidence of what is possible with the right personnel, good training, a focus on children and access to information and literature via technology.



Photo: Hallie Tamez

Nabin has not only benefited from a wonderful library donated by [Room to Read](#) but a pilot technology project managed by [Open Learning Exchange Nepal](#) (OLE). Founded and directed by Rabi Karmancharya, a Nepali native educated at [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) in the United States, OLE provides small, virtually indestructible laptop computers to students and teachers as a tool to access and enhance learning opportunities. Based on the One Laptop per Child program begun by Nicholas Negroponte, founder of MIT's [Media Lab](#), OLE has developed teacher-training modules, digital curriculum aligned with Nepal's educational standards and an ever-expanding digital library that is regularly updated and downloaded onto the computers. Requirements are a school server, electricity and broadband, if Internet access is desired, although it's not required for digital downloads of curriculum content and libraries.

What I witnessed in this small school gave me great hope for the educational future of children in poor communities in remote regions with limited access to the traditional tools and resources for learning. Watching two young girls, heads bowed over a keyboard, skillfully and comfortably working together on an English-language comprehension challenge, was my gift for the day!

Without this kind of access, most children in the rural villages of Nepal will continue to have very limited resources and learning opportunities. An investment in technology can level the playing field. NGN believes that education is a cornerstone in the fight to prevent child trafficking, especially in extremely remote areas such as Humla, the home district of most children under NGN's care. I hope the accomplishments at Kavre move us all to reflect on how best to impact education across the developing world. Together, we can make a difference.

Education is My future

By Suneeta Devi



Photo: Hallie Tamez

My name is Suneeta (not her real name). I am 17 years old. I live in Next Generation Nepal's Karnali house in Kathmandu with my sisters and brothers (in Nepal, friends are commonly called "sister" and "brother"). My school name is National United High School. I study in Class 10. What I like most about my school are the teachers because they are helpful.

One day I was surprised that a teacher asked Santosh (not his real name) brother and me to speak on the youth radio show program.

We had to travel from the school to the radio station. We got lost and it took a long time to reach to building. We waited 30 more minutes before they were ready to do the interview. We went inside a small room that was pretty dark. A woman came in and told us to put headphones on. I was a little bit scared and felt shy but I controlled myself.

The woman asked us questions about "the importance of education." I told her that education is the most important need of our lives because it will help me to know many things that I will use when I go back to Humla and become an example to other girls like me.

Many parents don't send their daughters to school because they are girls who will just marry into the house of her husband. I don't think this is a good way for girls to grow up. I want to do more than that in Nepal.

I was very glad to share my views with other people and I hope they listened to the radio show.

Trek to Change children`s Lives

By Dr. Brian Harsha



The trailhead at Lukla
Photo: Brian Harsha

[Dr. Brian Harsha](#), an oral and maxillofacial surgeon based in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, was so inspired after reading "[Little Princes](#)" by Next Generation Nepal founder Conor Grennan that he turned a trek to Everest Base Camp into an NGN fundraiser. His goal: To help NGN with its ongoing mission to reconnect trafficked children with their families. Here's his story in his own words and photos.

Suddenly, I was going to Everest. I'm not a climber, but every May I get on the Internet and follow the dispatches from expeditions climbing Mt. Everest in Nepal. This is generally the time of year when the winds are light enough and the temperatures mild enough (30 degrees below zero Fahrenheit) to allow humans to stand briefly at the summit of the world."



The village of Loboje
Photo: Brian Harsha

The dispatches are fascinating because they contain both the triumph and the tragedy of the human spirit. Some climbers are successful in their quest while others are not. Some may not even survive the ordeal. Now a friend was going to Everest Base Camp and he invited me along. The adventure of a lifetime. But it would be more than just an adventure.

As a University of Virginia alumnus, I was familiar with fellow alum and Next Generation Nepal founder Conor Grennan. His book "[Little Princes](#)" was released in the United States around the time I was preparing for my trip and, suddenly, my adventure also had a worthwhile purpose.



Climbing up from Namche Bazaar
Photo: Brian Harsha

Certainly I could spend a few minutes of my time telling friends and acquaintances about Next Generation Nepal. I knew friends would want to follow my trip as much as possible, so I set up a blog and made NGN a part of it, asking friends to pledge their support. I also contacted NGN Executive Director Hallie Tamez, who was extremely helpful, not only providing materials to distribute to friends, but offering ideas and encouragement.

My trekking companion and I left for Nepal at the end of April. We spent the first few days in Kathmandu, the bustling economic center of Nepal that many Nepalis consider a place of opportunity. As a result, the population of the country's capital, now over four million, continues to swell.



Tengboche with Everest in the background
Photo: Brian Harsha

After a short—and fortunately uneventful—flight to Lukla, we began a 15-day trek that would take us to the doorstep of the world’s tallest mountain. Our Sherpa guides, who were from the area, introduced us to a great many locals as we hiked through numerous small villages, and I have to say that the people of Nepal are some of the friendliest, kindest and hardest working I’ve ever met. Everywhere we went we saw school kids laughing and playing surrounded by some of the toughest geography I’ve ever seen and yet every piece of flat land I saw was put to some use. The sights were unforgettable, the mountains incredible.

After the trek, we returned to Kathmandu where I was fortunate enough to actually meet Hallie and discuss some of the wonderful things NGN is doing. Having seen both Kathmandu and rural villages, I am convinced NGN is on the right track. The future of trafficked children does not lie in the dirty streets of Kathmandu. It lies in the hills and valleys where they were born. NGN’s establishment of a transitional home in Simikot, Humla, where most of the trafficked children under NGN’s care originate, will help speed the reunification of children with their families and their reintegration into communities that live off Nepal’s resources.



The monument at Everest Base Camp
Photo: Brian Harsha

The most exciting thing I learned, however, is how easy it is for anyone to help. For amounts of money that we would almost take for granted, children's lives can be changed. Every contribution makes a difference. Now, with plenty of pictures to share, I have an even greater story to tell.

You, Too, Can Change a Child's Life

If you'd like to help us help the lost children of Nepal, [Donate](#) directly or explore our [Fundraiser Toolkit](#) for ideas on how to create your own NGN fundraiser.

Excited by the Potential: Why I Joined NGN`s

By Saanjeev M. Sherchan



Photo: Larry Closs

I first came to know about Next Generation Nepal (NGN) when founder Conor Grennan came to my office to share his vision for reconnecting trafficked children with their families in the far western Humla District in Nepal. This was back in August of 2006. I gave him my undivided attention even though I was quite unsure that he would be able to carry out his plans for multiple reasons. To me, the whole idea of establishing an NGO for trafficked children in Nepal by a Westerner seemed pretty ambitious. Or worse—destined to fail. My skepticism was not because I had doubts about Conor’s commitment; I was just mindful of the difficulties one faces while navigating through the seemingly intractable Nepali government office *etiquettes*. Kudos to Conor for his steadfastness and patience!

Five years on and against all odds, with the help of a very committed team, Conor has successfully managed to transform his dream into a reality. The incredible journey that he has undertaken from the time he first arrived in Nepal in 2004 to volunteer in an orphanage has basically changed the course of his life, and the lives of several children who were thought to be orphans but, in reality, were not. Along the way, he has touched many hearts, including my own. I count myself as one among many inspired to do something for those less privileged than me.

The Kathmandu of the seventies and eighties, when I grew up, was quite different from what you would normally find these days if you stroll around the city. I certainly don’t remember seeing so many street kids—particularly around the touristy areas—sniffing glue, begging and harassing tourists. My unofficial poll of fellow Kathmanduites confirms my observation—indeed, Kathmandu does appear to be full of street kids, which was not the case two or three decades ago. Yes, there were homeless kids back then, but their number today is mindboggling. The decade-long conflict has, no doubt, exacerbated a situation that contributes to internal trafficking

of children who end up on the streets, in illegal orphanages or trafficked to another country via sham adoptions.

In a country that is struggling to transition from a post-conflict situation with a weak government, the public seems to be largely unaware of the orphan-trafficking problem. And, at a time when the political parties are unable to form a national unity government, one can very well guess that the issue of trafficked children is not very high on their priority list. Fortunately, there are organizations such as NGN and many other local and international NGOs that are speaking on behalf of the voiceless. I am delighted to join the board of one such organization and hope to contribute in my own little way to uphold the mission and vision of the NGN!

About Sanjeev M. Sherchan

Sanjeev M. Sherchan is Assistant Director for Global Leadership Initiatives at the [Asia Society](#). In this capacity, Sherchan is primarily responsible for conceptualizing and overseeing all aspects of the Society's global initiatives. He joined the [Asia Society](#) in the fall of 2000 as a Program Assistant in the policy department. Sherchan also takes his role as one of the three Ombudsmen at the Asia Society very seriously. Prior to that, before returning to the United States for graduate studies in 1998, Sherchan worked as a consultant for PLAN International in Nepal. Sherchan has been a commentator on news and television programs and written op-eds on South Asia. In December 2008, he was one of the 60 National Democratic Institute (NDI) accredited foreign election monitors who observed voting and counting during Bangladesh's Ninth Parliamentary Elections. He was deployed in the Jessore district in south western Bangladesh. Sherchan is a graduate of Baylor University in Texas; he received his M.A. in International Relations in 2000.