

## **STARFISH!**

There are many seemingly intractable problems in this world, on a scale that can make hope for resolution seem impossible, and it is very easy to throw one's hands in the air and give up! Sex trafficking of young girls and boys is surely one of the worst of these issues when even from a small country, like Nepal in the Himalaya, the World Health Authority and others have estimated that some 10,000 to 15,000 girls, women and young boys are trafficked to India and beyond, every year - destined for a life of slavery, drudgery and degradation. An estimated 7,500 children per year are trafficked domestically for commercial sexual exploitation.

Events like the Maoist uprising and the more recent earthquake, exacerbate this problem as more families are plunged into poverty. In 2005, a good-hearted Nepali rescued 8 young girls (aged 5 to 7) as they were being trafficked to India. He and his wife, of limited circumstances, began to care for them but desperately needed help and they called upon friends and acquaintances. It was important to make a clear distinction with trafficking and the Astha Home for Girls was formally established with the financial and physical assistance of a Nepali restaurant owner, the Himalayan Patan Rotary Club, a Canadian volunteer, and a New Zealand rural development consultant with long time experience in Nepal. This New Zealander is a close friend and old work colleague of a member and past president of the Rotary Club of Central Blue Mountains.

The Astha Home is now a Government registered charity, run by a Board and complying each year with government legislation. The Rotary Club of Central Blue Mountains has been involved since 2012, following discussions between the two close friends, providing a Matching Grant and, more recently, direct financial support for the latest arrival at the Home. The latter was just 10 years old when introduced to the above mentioned Rotarian and his wife when they were visiting Nepal, and at great risk of being taken to the brothels of Mumbai by a close family member. The Rotarian promised financial support and she was immediately taken into the protection of the Home. In this supportive environment she has excelled!

The original 8 girls were from Humla, a very impoverished District in North Western Nepal, and when they were rescued and taken into care they were illiterate, pot-bellied, lice ridden and dirty, and totally lacking in social graces and life skills. They were given baths, "scrubbed", clean clothes and fed properly. Then their schooling and training in social and life skills began. They all attend, first a charity school and later a local, well-respected school in Kathmandu where they have excelled over the 10 years since they were rescued, and passed their School Leaving Certificate with a Division 1 pass.

At the Home, Indira, the "House Mother", has given them love and affection and taught them respect for each other, the benefits of working together, and trained them in all the skills necessary for a successful life – personal hygiene, cleanliness, importance of diet and exercise, spiritual strength (they are Hindus), empathy and kindness and good social manners. The girls have been given professional training in computers, cooking, vegetable growing, and sewing; they have been on picnics, to music shows and to cafes. Their horizons have been broadened immensely!

The transformation of these girls is stunning. They now speak, read and write English as well as Nepali. They are computer literate, capable of making their own clothes, bags, aprons and other garments, grow many of their vegetables, are competent cooks, demonstrate considerable artistic skills and cooperate as a team to keep the Home clean. This is in addition to having good school marks and yearnings to do further training as nurses, teachers, accountants and other professional activities through which they can become independent and give back to their community. They are now confident, intelligent, skilled young women with poise, elegance and social skills that will enable them to succeed well in life. What a difference to what it might have been! We may not have made much of a difference to the large numbers of trafficked children each year but we certainly made a huge difference to the life of these young “starfish” who we enabled back into the waters of a good productive, healthy and happy life.

One of the girls is now training to be a nurse, and eight more will commence training in nursing, teaching, accountancy and social work after they complete their schooling in the next twelve months.

The massive earthquake that struck Nepal in 2015, caused much upheaval to the lives of many people and destroyed or damaged many homes and buildings, especially in the hills and valleys outside of Kathmandu. The Astha Home for Girls is currently located in rented premises but the owner wants it back for his family members who lost their home in the earthquake. It is virtually impossible to find suitable and safe premises to rent in Kathmandu as a result of the earthquake induced demand for accommodation. Also, a lack of tenant protection legislation and rising rents accentuates the problem and the risks for the ‘Astha Home’.

A new premises for the Astha Home is urgent and it has been decided that the best solution is to construct a purpose built home with capacity for an expanded number of girls. Central Blue Mountains Rotary Club has been awarded a RAWCS Project Fund (tax deductible donations) to raise the A\$280,000 needed to construct a new, enlarged Astha Home for Girls. The proposed new premises would be able to house some 15 young girls as well as providing accommodation for the older girls while they complete their professional training, rooms for the “House Mother” would also be provided on the ground floor. This is a large project and help from many people will be required which is why we are casting our net wide. Even large and seemingly insurmountable problems can be realized when broken down into many small pieces. Will you help?

Please assist us with your generosity and enable us to give back a life of hope and opportunity to even more “starfish.”

Tax deductible donations made in Australia or New Zealand can be paid to

Australia:

RAWCS Website “Astha Home for Girls” Nepal

<https://donations.rawcs.com.au/Default.aspx?ProjectID=997&ReturnTo=4>

or

go to RAWCS Website and follow prompts for Donations

(Project No. 44/ 2016-17)

New Zealand:

Astha Home for Girls (Nepal/New Zealand)  
A/c No.12-3136-0138707-00  
Charities Commission No. 50311,



























**Madan Smarak Higher Secondary School**  
Pulchowk, Kathmandu - 2008

MAJAK-CHIEF

Roll No. 1

Sl. No.	Subjects	Full Marks	Prelim Marks	Marks Obtained			Total
				1st Term	2nd Term	3rd Term	
1	English	100	32	12	35	54	80
2	Nepali	100	32	8	23	54	85
3	Maths	100	32	9	29	57	95
4	Science	100	32	8	29	55	94
5	Social Studies	100	32	9	29	54	92
6	Population and Ev.	50	16	5	14	29	48
7	Health and Physical	50	16	5	15	28	48
8	English II	50	16	4	14	23	41
9	Maths II	100	32	8	23	60	91
10	Computer	50	16	5	15	27	47
<b>Grand Total</b>							<b>731</b>

Result: Pass  
Percentage: 91.38  
School Days: 135  
Present Days: 130

DIVISION: Dis  
Rank: 1

Class Teacher: *[Signature]*  
Exam Co-ordinator: *[Signature]*  
Principal: *[Signature]*  
Date: 2008/12/20

Remarks: 1st term 10% 2nd term 30% 3rd term 60%

**Rotaract Club Of Lalitpur**  
Sponsored by: Rotary Club of Lalitpur  
Chartered Dec. 28, 1998  
RI Dist. 3295

**SANJU MEMORIAL FOUNDATION**

This  
**Certificate of Merit**  
is presented to  
SHRUTI PAWAL  
for  
active and enthusiastic participation  
in  
**ESSAY WRITING COMPETITION**  
organized by Rotaract Club of Lalitpur jointly with  
Sanju Memorial Foundation  
on  
13<sup>th</sup> December 2011, Tuesday  
at Madan Smarak Higher Secondary School, Pulchowk.  
We stand by the faith that you will continue to explore  
your potentialities in your future endeavors of life.

Keep it up and all the best.

Awarded on this day of 28<sup>th</sup> December 2011, Wednesday during the  
14<sup>th</sup> Charter Day of Rotaract Club of Lalitpur.

*[Signature]*  
Mrs. Sunita Tamrakar  
Chairperson  
SM Foundation

*[Signature]*  
Mr. Ratna GC  
Chief Judge  
CEO of Touch Stone

*[Signature]*  
Rtr. Roshan Bajracharya  
President 2011-12  
Rotaract Club of Lalitpur







