



Girls at the ChoraChori-Nepal Refuge and Rehabilitation Centre in Kathmandu valley

## **ChoraChori H1 report**

**January – June 2020**

### **1. Introduction**

This report covers the first half (H1) of the current ChoraChori financial year that runs from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> June. It will come as no surprise that, because of COVID-19, this period presented unprecedented financial and operational challenges. Thankfully, because of the financial strength with which we entered the year following a very successful 2019 together with continued supporter generosity, we were able to sustain operations at home and abroad. And our two NGO partners in Nepal, ChoraChori-Nepal (CC-N) and Mithila Wildlife Trust (MWT), were able to deliver life-saving support to thousands of vulnerable people in urban slums and rural communities during a prolonged COVID lockdown period.

### **2. Background**

ChoraChori (the Nepalese word for “children”) is a registered charity (reg no 1159770) based in south Devon. During the reporting period, we were staffed by the CEO, Philip Holmes, and his wife Beverley (part-time) working from home to keep core costs to the minimum. Philip and Beverley were supported by volunteers in both UK and Nepal and in the day-to-day financial operation of the charity by one of the charity’s six Trustees, Chartered Accountant Brian Muirhead. We derive our financial support from the general public (the database has 800 subscribers), approximately 40 Trusts and two corporate donors. In October 2019 we began a three-year collaboration with the Soroptimist International Federation of Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) in a new programme called “Empowering Girls in Nepal” that focusses on providing training and educational support to girl victims of abuse in Nepal. ChoraChori will remain SIGBI’s chosen international charity until September 2022.

ChoraChori provides financial, volunteer, consultancy, evaluation/monitoring and capacity building support to two independent Nepalese NGOs. These are CC-N in Kathmandu valley (since January 2015) and MWT in Dhanusha District, southeast Nepal (since February 2020).

#### **CC-N**

Historically, CC-N has conducted a range of activities:

- The rescue, repatriation and rehabilitation of trafficked and displaced Nepalese children (mainly boys) from India



- The rescue and rehabilitation of the victims of child rape from within Nepal itself, as well as taking legal action against the rapists
- Education and training of rescued children alongside vulnerable girls and women. The training has encompassed basic and advanced six-month-long residential tailoring courses and the operation of a silver jewellery training workshop.
- Educational support, both capital and revenue, to under-resourced state schools within its home District of Lalitpur.
- Support and training of individual children from within the local community.



CC-N has its office in Patan, part of the southeast Kathmandu conurbation, with its childcare facilities at Thaukhel which lies in the hills 40 minutes' drive to the southeast in a more rural part of Lalitpur District. At the start of this year these facilities consisted of:

- A Children's Refuge and Rehabilitation Centre (CRRC) for girl victims of abuse. This provides accommodation, protection and rehabilitation facilities for rape victims. Alongside hostel accommodation, CRRC has a collocated Child Trauma Management Centre, classrooms for non-formal education and tailoring/jewellery workshops.
- A boys' hostel which is 15 minutes' walk from CRRC. This opened in July 2019 as a transit accommodation for boys repatriated from India, offering assessment, rehabilitation and outreach services prior to family reunification.
- A separate girls' hostel which is 10 minutes' walk from CRRC. This opened in December 2019 through funding provided by SIGBI, the plan being that this would provide hostel accommodation for up to 30 girls from remote areas to allow them to take part in vocational training. The hostel could also act as a half-way house for girls returning to their families and communities after rehabilitation.
- A visitors' flat to accommodate overseas volunteers who assist with capacity building and specialist training.

## MWT

Our relationship with MWT began during this reporting period when in February, along with colleagues from CC-N, volunteer educational consultant Caroline Milne and I visited Dhanusha to explore the possibility of setting up a CC-N regional office and training centre. Dhanusha lies within Province 2, southeast Nepal, which is a high-risk area for sexual abuse and child rape, and our intention was to get closer to the point of need. We concluded that, given the cautious and circumspect nature of this community, it would be more prudent and most productive to





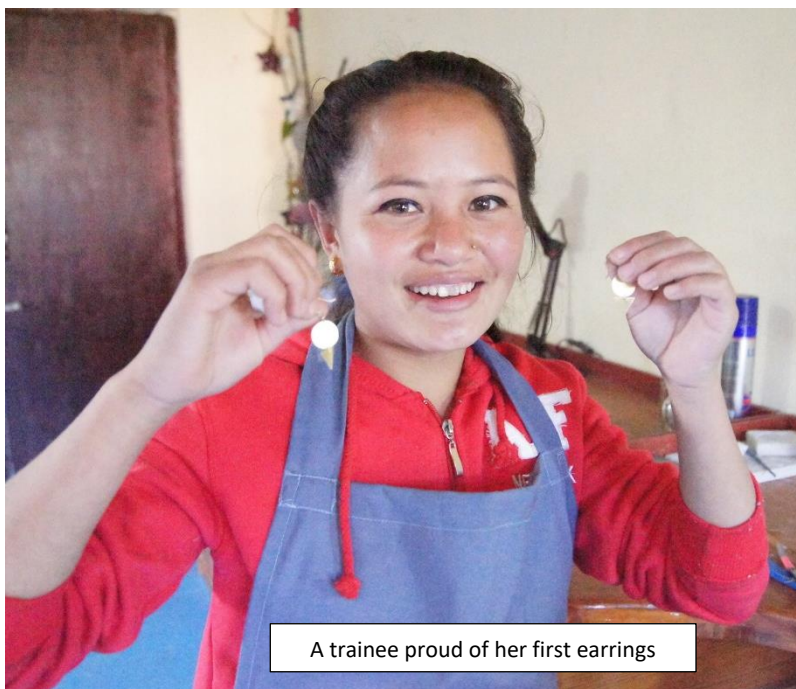
build relationships through an established local organisation. MWT had hosted our visit and, although it is a wildlife and conservation NGO, it has a strong involvement in social welfare within the region and conducts its conservation work in close collaboration with village communities. It was obvious that there were pre-existing skills in weaving and that, in conjunction with [Nepal Knotcraft Centre](#), we could refine and develop these for the international market while using locally available natural fibres. Therefore, we decided at the time to launch some small-scale children/women/girls' projects to begin our relationship (see below).

### 3. Activities in Nepal pre-COVID

#### CC-N

In this reporting period CC-N provided jewellery training to seven girls, these including two rape survivors and four young deaf women (deaf people are highly stigmatised in Nepal and struggle to find employment). One young local woman joined the group. The women were supported by a local trainer; unfortunately, because of COVID, we were unable to provide advanced training support that would otherwise have been provided by our colleagues at [Her Future Coalition](#).

A total of 33 girls and young women took part in tailoring training at basic and advanced levels. Of these, 29 were from the local community. Only seven girls were able to use the new girls' hostel before we had to close the facility prematurely (see below).



A trainee proud of her first earrings

ChoraChori had two British volunteers in support of CRRC during January – Caroline Milne and Lavinia White. They played a significant role in recreational activities and in educational support to the staff and children.

#### MWT

Following the February visit to Dhanusha, we agreed to provide funding towards the construction of a community learning centre to support children from Dalit (untouchable) castes with home study. This cost £9,500 and was funded by private donors. We also agreed to construct a simple training space where women from the same castes could be taught weaving skills. This project cost £1,670 and was funded through SIGBI.



Finishing touches to the new women's training centre

#### 4. Activities in Nepal post-COVID

A three-month-long lockdown began on the 24<sup>th</sup> March. This meant a suspension of most of our previous activities. CC-N staff could no longer travel into India to rescue children because of the lockdown and an associated border closure. Moreover, field work within Nepal itself had to cease. We made the tough decision to close the recently opened Boys' Hostel and Girls' Hostel as it seemed unlikely that rescue work would resume in the near future and this allowed us to implement some immediate cost saving. We also decided to close the CC-N Head Office and have staff work from home. CC-N's regular activities had to be confined to caring for the 21 children who were staying at the refuge and providing some reduced vocational training to girls and young women. All visits by volunteers had to be cancelled which had a huge impact on programme development and local capacity building.

The communities in which we operate experienced extreme difficulties:

- People only qualified for government food relief if they were Nepali citizens in their home areas. So, migrant workers in Kathmandu valley did not qualify. Nor did people from marginalised Dalit communities in south Nepal who have never had citizenship although they have lived in Nepal for generations.
- Families in Dhanusha, who live a hand-to-mouth existence, were particularly challenged as the young men – husbands and fathers – were mainly in India where they had been earning an income as migrant workers. These men were in lockdown within India and on top of that, the border was closed so that they were unable to return to Nepal. The women at home had no income, no food and because of lockdown could not work in the fields.
- In many areas in south Nepal, government funds for food relief were not utilised as local politicians and bureaucrats retained the funds to obtain kickbacks from food suppliers.
- Some food was distributed according to political interests.
- There was no food relief response from major charities or the UN to the Nepal crisis even though people faced famine

In response, we launched two food relief public appeals through the Big Give that realised a total of £39,527; this included a grant of £12,500 from major donors through Gandys Foundation. We also received further grant funding including from the charity Last Night a DJ Saved My Life totalling £10,000, £2,000 from a major donor and £513 from a corporate. Total donations came to £54,356.

The relief funds we transferred to our Nepal partners allowed CC-N to feed 1,055 people, including 306 children. Through its extensive network, MWT managed to reach scattered communities across 15 Districts in south Nepal to feed 27,131 people including 11,446 children. We were moved to learn of how people were in tears as they received their food aid. This has undoubtedly been one of ChoraChori's greatest achievements as we made such a massive impact in the midst of such adversity.



A food relief delivery

#### 5. Fundraising and financial overview

Like all charities, the impact upon fundraising has been massive as people have lost their jobs, businesses closed and Trust investments (that fuel grant-making) plummeted in value. We have been unable to take part in challenges and events, travel has been restricted and there is less opportunity for face-to-face engagement.

Income in H1 totalled £148,341 which is substantially down on the £244,664 in the same period of 2019 but it could have been much worse. Our summer Big Give Appeal, which incorporated "The Big Story" (in which we invited supporters to write short lockdown memoirs of childhood), realised £38,353 compared to the £89,000 received in the 2019 summer Appeal (that was linked to two fundraising events). We have been most concerned to note that

our level of unrestricted funds has dropped significantly during this period. We started the year with £90,674, this equating to the Trustees' then target unrestricted holdings of 12 months' UK operating costs. By the 30<sup>th</sup> June this had reduced to £62,214.

Clearly, a continued drop in unrestricted reserves means that the charity would not be sustainable far into 2021. The Trustees have therefore had to make inevitable cuts in expenditure in our project activities and support elements in both Nepal and UK. For example, child rescue, which was already in deficit at the start of the year, has been suspended for both operational and financial reasons. And we will be reducing funding support to NGO core staff in Kathmandu. With these cutbacks and identification of new environmental/community support projects, we are totally confident that unrestricted reserves will bottom out at approximately £34,000 by the year-end before recovering to a revised Trustees' target of £40,000 by mid-2021. This lower level reflects a temporary reduction in activities in Nepal and a likely reduced residential childcare commitment in future.

## 6. In Conclusion

This has been a challenging first half of 2020 for all charities and ChoraChori has been no exception. That said, we are very proud of our continued supporter engagement and with our remarkable achievements in Nepal, feeding a total of 28,186 people in the most desperate circumstances. We are currently planning new community-based programmes for launch in 2021 that will span issues such as direct support to survivors of abuse, livelihoods, education, training and the environment with our focus primarily on women and girls from marginalised and low-caste groups. These people are from the very same communities whom we helped during lockdown.

In [a recent survey](#), 45% of small charities operating overseas predicted that they will have closed within 12 months. ChoraChori will not be one of them.

## 7. Request for support

**Central to our recovery and continued impact in 2021 will be a successful Big Give Christmas Challenge for which we have a fundraising target of £100,000. In the week beginning 1<sup>st</sup> December, supporters will be invited to make online donations totalling £50,000 that can be automatically matched. This requires us to find £25,000 in matching pledges beforehand, with the Big Give finding the remaining pledges from their own network.**

**Our top funding priority is a pledge towards this Challenge, the minimum pledge amount being £100 and with nothing to pay until after the Challenge ends on the 8<sup>th</sup> December. The deadline for pledges is 5 p.m. on the 28<sup>th</sup> August and pledges can be made using [this link](#).**

**If a pledge cannot be made, a grant would be very welcome to help bridge us through the current transitional phase and allow us to start 2021 with renewed strength.**

Thank you.



Philip Holmes  
Lt Col (retd)  
CEO/Founder  
18<sup>th</sup> August 2020