



MITRATA-NEPAL

FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN

SPONSOR HANDBOOK

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Mitrata-Nepal Foundation for Children

Sponsor Handbook

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Introduction

Welcome to Mitrata Nepal Foundation for Children! We are pleased and grateful that you have chosen to be a sponsor! This manual has been prepared to help you understand Mitrata and the work we do in Nepal. Whether you are sponsoring an individual child or The Contact Center, your support will impact not only the child or children you support, but also the lives of those with whom they come in contact every day.

For ease of use, whether you are sponsoring an individual child or The Contact Center we will refer to “the child you support.”

“Mitrata” is the Nepali word for friendship, and the organization was created out of friendships, has grown because of friendships, and now creates new friendships with those who are involved with the work we do to benefit the children of Nepal. You now have the opportunity to create a friendship with a child on the other side of the world. We hope that this is a long, enjoyable and successful relationship that will enable the child you sponsor to embark on a productive life that will benefit not only the child, but their family, their community, and future generations.

Please take the time to read and digest the information in this sponsor handbook. We know that there is a lot of information here, but we believe it will help you understand and appreciate how your sponsorship provides the opportunity for a child to build a productive life that would otherwise have been unattainable.

For more information about sponsorship, please visit www.mitrata.org, or contact Sponsorship Committee chair Danny Williger at dwilliger@sbcglobal.net or 314-712-0365. You can also check the sponsorship tab on the web site for updated versions of this handbook.

Core Values That Guide Our Work

The Mitrata Board has developed a set of core values to help guide our future development. As an organization Mitrata is committed to:

- Caring for children and making a difference in their lives in a tangible way
- Education as a foundation for a successful life
- Transparency in all of our interactions
- Championing and empowering children to give back to their communities
- Respecting Nepali culture and traditions

Our Mission is to Educate and Empower Underprivileged Children to Reach Their Full Potential as Citizens of Nepal

Mitrata focuses primarily on education as the method of empowerment. Education is not easily obtained in Nepal, especially if you are poor. All of the children we support are documented as poor by the Nepali government. We have learned that for children to learn and succeed in school, they must have food, a place to live that is safe, good health and encouragement. Most of our children are lacking some or all of these things, so our mission is to provide for them. Since some of our children need to be in a boarding school to achieve the optimal learning environment, we work with the parents to make this decision, and ultimately it is up to them to decide where their child will live. We want the children we sponsor to reach their full potential, meaning that we will sponsor them for as long as is needed for them to reach their personal goals. Counselors are available to help them explore their options for careers and to help them set realistic goals. We have sponsored children that have reached adulthood and have graduated from our program. Their stories are heartwarming and inspiring. All they needed was a chance. We encourage our graduates to stay in Nepal and help Nepal grow as a country. We do not condone bringing the children we support to the United States.

What It Means to Be A Sponsor

Sponsoring a child in Nepal with Mitrata is a personal experience, one that fosters an enduring relationship between you and a child that lives half a world away. As valuable as the experience and relationship are for you, it is at least as meaningful for the child who benefits from your sponsorship. Mitrata is and will remain a smaller organization that focuses on individuals, providing comprehensive services and support that meet the needs of each child. This fosters personal attention and flexibility so that needs can be anticipated, addressed, and followed up on in a manner that is tailored to the individual child. The support you provide will help lift them from poverty and enable them to build a life of productivity, safety, purpose and meaning.

Mitrata works in the US to raise the money necessary to fund the services on the ground in Nepal. The program in Nepal is facilitated by Bhuvaneshwori Satyal Foundation (BSF), which is led by Leena and Yogesh Satyal. Mitrata and BSF work together closely to assure that the children are provided with all they need. You can learn more about BSF and how we work collaboratively in Nepal in the section regarding the relationship Mitrata has with BSF.

The financial commitment you provide to your sponsored child has a significant and lasting impact on the lives of the people of Nepal. Nepal is a desperately impoverished nation struggling to support itself and its people. Your support will be felt throughout the child's family and community and will flow through to future generations. Just as a rising tide lifts all boats, the rising level of education, health, prosperity and community

consciousness that the children share will spread and benefit those they interact with throughout their lives.

Please review the information in the Sponsor Statement of Understanding provided later in this handbook that details many aspects of sponsorship in greater detail.

The Children We Sponsor

The children we sponsor come from families of varying social backgrounds, and many have experienced significant trauma. The common factor in the lives of all the children Mitrata supports is extreme poverty that is often deeper and more pervasive than most Americans can fathom. The typical child comes from a family situation in which multiple generations live in cramped quarters with no running water or facilities, no central heat or air conditioning, and where they may or may not have adequate food, bedding, or other resources that we usually take for granted. Families typically lack financial or other resources to provide even basic nutrition, and the children often start life malnourished and lacking basic school-readiness skills.

Unfortunately, many of our children are from families who are unable to care for them in their homes, and for this reason some are placed in boarding schools where they are provided with clothing, shelter, nutritious meals, and safety in addition to their education. All of the children we support are provided with medical care.

The children typically maintain close family bonds, but also see their sponsors as a sort of extended family. Both the children and their families have deep appreciation for all that you provide. Your involvement in their lives, their care and their education provides them with hope and opportunity that would be otherwise unattainable. The children take this opportunity seriously and work diligently in their educational pursuits.

Your Relationship with Your Sponsored Child

Mitrata works to foster a close and supportive relationship between the sponsor and sponsored child. Most children have only one or two sponsors. You will have the opportunity to write to and receive letters from the child you support.

Older children sometimes join and post on social media, and it's not uncommon for sponsors to receive friend or follow requests from their sponsored children or from others associated with Mitrata and BSF. Some children also communicate directly via social media. If you participate in this sort of casual contact, please be mindful of your social media presence, and make sure what you post and communicate is age appropriate for the children who may view it. For more on this please see the section on social media contacts in the Sponsor Statement of Understanding.

Sponsors are encouraged to travel to Nepal to see the services and programs Mitrata and BSF provide, and to meet the child you sponsor. Sponsor trips take place every year in November, provide a window into the world the children live in, and allow you to

experience the rich history and beauty of Kathmandu and life in the Himalayas. The children anticipate and love the visits, put on shows and other entertainment, and value getting to know the people who are supporting and caring for them. You will have the opportunity to meet your child and spend time with them, and in most cases you will be able to see their school. There is also an opportunity to spend time in the Contact Center where the youngest children are educated. There is always a cultural part of the trip to the historic parts of Kathmandu. You will get to know Leena and Yogesh Satyal and the other staff from BSF who work with the children. This will help you to understand your child and their culture, and how the program you support helps them grow and develop. There are also plenty of opportunities for great shopping experiences, and there is nothing quite like riding a taxi in Kathmandu! After visiting Nepal, many sponsors comment that the visit was a life altering experience and seek ways to expand their participation in support of the program.

Due to potential disruption of program activities, visiting your sponsored child other than during the sponsor trip is not allowed.

Exchanging Letters with Your Sponsored Child

Twice each year you will have the opportunity to write and send letters to your sponsored child, and your child will send letters to you! This is a tradition that provides the basis for the development of a personal and lasting relationship that nurtures the growth of the child and their relationship with their sponsor. The letters and small gifts you send (such as family photos, stickers or similar items) are valued by the children and give them a sense of the person or family who supports their education and care. The letters sent by sponsors are often shared between the children and are kept and treasured. Family photos of sponsors are often displayed prominently. When you share details of your life, the child comes to understand and appreciate who is helping them navigate their way through life in a country that is often otherwise unprepared to support and nurture them.

Because letters are often delivered to the children all at once, we want each child to receive something. If you are unable to send a letter, please let us know so we can send a letter and small gift, so they are part of the experience and know they are thought of and valued.

When you receive letters from your sponsored child, they may use familiar terms, and it's important to understand the basis for this. Your child may call you auntie, uncle, dad or mom as that is the type of influence you have in their lives. Many of our children call each other brother or sister when they are close friends. When summoning a waiter in a restaurant in Nepal, the word "dai," meaning brother is often used. If your child refers to you with a family noun you can welcome it as a sign of their affection. When the people in a culture see everyone as a relative, it helps to explain why the Nepali people are so warm and welcoming.

Photos and Information from Nepal

You will be provided with a link to an account on Box.com that will hold photos, letters and other information about your sponsored child. Please save this link so you can access this information when you want it. You are free to share the photos with others so they can share in the joy of supporting a child in need!

Levels of Sponsorship and How Sponsorship Supports Your Sponsored Child

When you sponsor a child through Mitrata, you are covering most costs to raise the child into a life of productivity and stability. Mitrata works in cooperation with BSF to assure that all anticipated, and in most cases unanticipated needs will be met.

Sponsors may choose to sponsor an individual child or children, or may sponsor the Contact Center.

Contact Center Sponsorship

The Contact Center is an early childhood education program for impoverished children who have not previously attended school. Children aged 3-10 are provided an educational foundation in a nurturing, loving environment similar to the Montessori model. The children are taught basic skills including reading, writing, math and an introduction to English. They are also provided with hygiene education, healthcare and two high-quality protein-rich meals each day. After 18-24 months, many of these children are ready to enter the school system, and after testing are typically placed in second or third grade. At this point they enter our individual sponsorship program.

Contact Center sponsors contribute a pledged amount of their choosing. These donations support staff salaries, books and supplies, nutrition, healthcare and an after-school program. The Contact Center empowers the children with the nutrition and skills necessary to become a successful student with the hope for a stable and productive future. Contact Center sponsors receive updates and photos about the Contact Center and the children at least twice each year.

Individual Child Sponsorship

Most of our sponsored children come from Contact Center graduates. A home study is conducted by a social worker, legal documents are established with the child's guardian, and health and educational evaluations are performed. Every effort is made to work closely with the guardian to form a partnership in helping the child.

Once a child has been accepted into our program and placed in a private school, we look for a sponsor who is willing to support that child. When possible, we try to honor a sponsor's preference for the gender and age of the sponsored child. Sponsorship dollars pay for tuition, uniforms, books, supplies, healthcare, counseling, career and

empowerment programs and the cost of program management and BSF personnel who provide guidance and care to the children.

If your child resides with their family, your sponsorship dollars will cover all educational costs, healthcare, nutritious meals while in school, clothing, counseling, and other identified individual needs.

If your child is unable to reside with their family due to extreme poverty, abuse, violence, neglect, or another situation that makes the home unsafe or unavailable, they will be placed in a residential school where all additional necessary expenses, including residential costs, are covered. Continued contact with their families is encouraged and supported. We do not separate children from their families. The cost of a boarding school sponsorship is roughly double that of a child who lives at home. The placement decision is made jointly by the families and the BSF staff.

Your financial commitment is based on the average cost for a child in the setting where they are placed. Funds are aggregated and disbursed by BSF to schools and for other program costs such as medical care and counseling as well as staff salaries. In situations where there are extraordinary costs such as when a child develops a serious illness and requires extensive medical care, your sponsorship commitment will remain the same and aggregate funds will be used to cover the additional expense to the extent possible.

All children attend private schools, and the education and services they receive are provided through and monitored by BSF in close collaboration with Mitrata leadership. Some children may have more than one sponsor when a single sponsor is unable to meet the full financial commitment needed to support that child. In almost all cases there are no more than two sponsors.

Sponsorship pledges can be paid monthly, quarterly or annually. It is our hope that the sponsor can provide support until the child completes their education and becomes self-sufficient. However, if circumstances change and a sponsor is unable to continue their donation, Mitrata looks for another sponsor or seeks additional funding so that the child is assured of their continuance in the program. We are committed to providing every child in our program with the opportunity to complete their education and reach their full potential, whether that means achieving a vocational technical certification or a university degree. No child is ever dropped from care because a sponsor is unable to continue their financial support.

When children graduate from 12th grade, they remain in the program through the completion of their education or training. Sponsors are asked to continue to support them at the same level as they were previously. Because they have been provided excellent educational opportunities and support throughout their growth and development, many of our children choose to attend university education or vocational training. Mitrata is committed to supporting graduates through whatever course of study they choose. If sponsorship funds are insufficient to cover the cost, we will engage in

fundraising to meet the needs of the sponsored individual. We focus on empowering those we support to follow their dreams.

What Success Looks Like for Our Children

Mitrata seeks to support and empower children in Nepal so that they can follow their dreams and accomplish self-identified educational and vocational goals. We work to help them rise from extreme poverty and to create lives of productivity and meaning. When a child reaches the 10th grade in Nepal, they take the SEE, an iron-gate test they must pass to qualify for further education or vocational training. We are proud that 99% of the children we support have passed this test and moved on to advanced training or education. Many then enter university education or vocational training.

Once a sponsored child completes their education or training and can support themselves, they graduate from Mitrata and BSF and are no longer financially supported through sponsorship. Previous graduates include doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers, engineers and hotel workers, all of whom will contribute to their communities and their families. Sponsors make a difference not only in the life of a child, but in the lives of their families and communities for many years to come. This ripple effect means that the impact of sponsorship dollars is multiplied many times over. Considering the starting point for these children, we believe that the results they achieve are nothing short of extraordinary. Your sponsorship truly provides the opportunity for a productive life that would otherwise have been unattainable.

Advanced Education, Graduation and the Process of Launching

As our sponsored children grow and thrive, the time will come for them to consider the direction their adult lives will take. After successfully completing the Secondary Educational Examination (SEE) at the end of the 10th grade, they will participate in extensive testing and counseling to help them decide on an educational or vocational direction. Decisions regarding educational and life goals are the responsibility of the child in conjunction with Leena Satyal and their counselors at BSF. The sponsor's role is to encourage the child, and to respect the decisions they have made. Please keep in mind that sponsors may not be aware of or appreciate the educational or vocational system in Nepal, or the unique challenges that this system may pose.

After completing their education or vocational training it will be time for our sponsored children to separate and strike out on their own as independent, functioning citizens of Nepal! During this period BSF will continue to provide counseling and guidance, as well as material support such as basic furniture or other items they determine to be necessary for success. Sponsor support is encouraged until the process of launching is complete, which can last up to a year after the completion of school or vocational training. Graduation from Mitrata and BSF occurs after the launching period is complete.

One of the most beautiful aspects of child sponsorship is the personal relationship that is nurtured between sponsors and those they sponsor. For many, these relationships will endure after graduation from the program, typically taking the form of emails, social media contacts or messages sent via other messaging services. Since graduates can easily maintain contact, Mitrata and BSF will stop facilitating the exchange of physical letters after graduation. Continued informal communication is at the discretion of both the sponsor and graduate. Sponsors are urged to maintain age and socially appropriate messages and posts, and to remain culturally sensitive in all communications.

Following graduation from BSF and Mitrata, both organizations will continue to serve as consultants with graduates and sponsors to facilitate the process of launching, and to address any new or ongoing challenges. Sponsors are expected to report any problems they learn of regarding graduates to the Executive Director so they issues can be managed appropriately. Mitrata staff will help former sponsors navigate any difficulties that arise in their relationships with graduates.

All challenges that graduates and sponsors encounter will be considered and managed individually, flexibly, and with wider consideration of how decisions will impact the graduate and others. At no time should a former sponsor offer or provide direct financial support to their sponsored child, either before or after graduation. Our goal is to provide the resources for those we serve to become independently functioning adults, and we wish to avoid any dependency that could interfere with this goal.

Although our financial obligations as sponsors cease at the end of the year of graduation from the program, the relationships we worked so hard to forge are intended to endure. Graduates will continue to enjoy informal guidance and assistance from BSF, and former sponsors can remain in the Mitrata family as long as they wish.

Flexible Adaptation

Because Mitrata and BSF are smaller organizations that work in harmony to serve the needs of the children, we are able to meet the sometimes extraordinary needs of those we serve. All of us are now aware of how global events such as a pandemic can interrupt almost every aspect of life. Nepal has been severely affected by Covid, and Mitrata worked together with BSF to make sure the children and their families obtained what they needed to make it through, including provision of devices such as laptops, tablets and phones so the children could engage in distance learning, and deliveries of nutritious foods, educational materials and other supplies to support and maintain education and health.

Other situations occasionally arise that impact individual children in different ways. Some of these are positive, such as a child who has the ambition and ability to seek professional education. Some of these are challenging, such as a child who has a sudden or serious health concern. In all of these instances Mitrata and BSF work together to meet the needs of each child, whether the challenge is an extraordinary

educational opportunity or an extraordinary medical challenge. We remain dedicated to meeting the individual needs of the child, regardless of the circumstances.

Our Vision Is to See a Nepal Where All Children Will Have the Opportunity to Be Educated and Reach Their Unique and Full Potential

Educating a child empowers the family, lifts them from poverty, and develops a community and a country. Nepal is one of the poorest nations in South Asia. Many of the parents of our children cannot read and live day to day. We want to give their children a chance for a different life based on giving them an education that is otherwise not available to children of poor families.

The History of Mitrata-Nepal Foundation for Children

Understanding Mitrata's history is essential in understanding how the organization operates, and how far we have come in the short time Mitrata has existed. Christine Schutz, our Executive Director, travelled to Nepal in 2000 to visit a Nepali friend. While there, Christine was overcome with the poverty she saw and had a desire to do something to help. When she returned home, she spoke to her friends about helping children in Nepal and one of them told her that if she found a child to help, she would sponsor that child and give money for his or her support. When Christine went back to Nepal in 2002 she heard about a child who seemed to be an orphan and was wandering in a village outside of Kathmandu, begging for food and sleeping wherever she could. Christine and her Nepali friend went to the village and found the little girl. She was sick and malnourished, and they realized they could not leave her there as she was indeed an orphan and no one in the village could take her in. The email Christine wrote to her friend, Nancy Williger, is on our website. This child, Ishwori, was about seven when Christine found her, though she appeared to be about five. Now Ishwori is a self-sufficient adult, employed as a social worker and helping as a volunteer with current Mitrata children.

For a time, Mitrata partnered with Christine's friend in Nepal and supported a children's home where the children could live if their families could not support them. Other children we supported were able to live with their families and we paid for their education in private schools. As the number of supported children increased, we were able to network and find sponsors. Mitrata began to grow.

Initially, the organization was under the auspices of OUEST, a non-profit already operating in Nepal. By 2005, it was clear that Mitrata needed to become an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization. When that goal was accomplished, a board was formed with Christine as the President and Nancy Williger as the Vice President. The pioneers who brought Mitrata from an idea to reality spent the first years trying to develop an infrastructure to keep track of sponsors, Nepali children, and money. Christine traveled to Nepal each year to monitor the program and check on the development of each of our children.

In the early years, the organization “Mitrata” was really the Board. There were no employees. All the work was done by volunteer efforts. In 2010 we were financially stable enough to hire a part time development director, Alexis Mead. She developed the data base, helped market the organization, and generally enabled Mitrata to look and function like an organization. She is still employed as the Director of Development and is helped now by two part-time employees. Christine has volunteered her time as Executive Director since the beginning, and continues to do so. This has evolved into a full-time job. Our Board is still very much a working board. Our sponsors connect with the Sponsor Committee and our fundraisers are planned by the Fundraising Committee and organization staff, and are executed with extensive volunteer effort. The current staff meets weekly to address the needs of the organization. To keep our US expenses low, there is no Mitrata office. Our address is a mailbox at Postnet in Webster Groves.

The Relationship Between Mitrata and Bhuvaneshwori Satyal Foundation (BSF)

In early 2012 Mitrata established a new relationship with our current Nepali partner organization, Bhuvaneshwori Satyal Foundation (BSF). At the time, BSF was running a “preschool” for children ages 5-12 who had never attended school. They were struggling financially but were doing a great service for extremely poor children. When a child finished their program, BSF would look for sponsors to help them attend good schools. The work they were doing was a natural fit with the goals of Mitrata. The children under our care who could not live at home were moved to boarding schools as we were no longer associated with the children’s home we initially worked with. The Contact Center (as the preschool is called) became a feeder program for our child sponsorship program.

About thirty children attend the Contact Center each year. Our strategic planning goals involved expanding the space for the Contact Center, and BSF was able to find a new building and move in 2021, achieving that goal. We hope to open another Contact Center in another neighborhood in Kathmandu in the next few years. We have been working on the development of metrics to quantify the progress of each child as they proceed through the curriculum of the Contact Center. Because of the comprehensive services the children receive, most are able to test into second or third grade after spending two years in the Contact Center. Since the Contact Center children go home at 3:00 pm, we added an after-school program for Contact Center graduates who attend school and have nowhere to go after their school day while their parents are working. They arrive a little after 3:00 pm and stay as late as 6:00 pm if needed.

Mitrata has a close working relationship with BSF in Nepal. They are an independent Nepali non-governmental organization (NGO) with their own Board of Directors with five members. As an NGO, they are subject to the policies and regulations of Nepal and are monitored by the Social Welfare Council in Nepal. BSF is run by Leena Satyal as Executive Director and her husband, Yogesh Satyal, is the Chair of the Board. They have four staff, including a Psychosocial Counselor, two Program Coordinators and an Office Helper, all of whom monitor the well-being of the children. They also employ a Finance Manager to keep track of finances. The Contact Center and after-school

program employs six additional staff, including teachers, cooks/helpers and a Program Director. BSF also houses several of the older children who have no place to live or are in transition.

Leena and Yogesh come to the United States every other year to participate in our board's strategic planning meeting. During their visit here, we hold several small coffee meetings so sponsors can meet them and learn directly about their child.

There is a written contract between BSF and Mitrata that is renewed every three years. It delineates the roles and responsibilities of both Mitrata and BSF.

Structure of the Mitrata Board

There are five committees that do the work of the Board. The Board Committees of Mitrata are:

Sponsorship

The Sponsorship committee consists of a small group of Board members and child sponsors who meet at least four times per year. The committee serves as the principal communication point between the organization, the sponsors and their sponsored children. In addition, the committee oversees recruiting and orienting new sponsors, facilitating communication with current sponsors, educating sponsors about their role within Mitrata, and nurturing the relationships among sponsors, their sponsored children, and the organization. It is also the responsibility of the committee to represent the interests of the child sponsors at Board meetings and in organizational decisions. Please note the following section on Sponsorship Committee events and activities for a full list of what the committee does to support sponsors, to provide the opportunity to meet other sponsors and to learn more about the Mitrata programs. Sponsors who have questions or concerns are encouraged to contact the Sponsorship Chair or another committee member. The current chair is Danny Williger, and he can be reached at dwilliger@sbcglobal.net or 314-712-0365.

Finance

The Finance committee is responsible for the investment policy of the organization and monitors how funds are invested and utilized. They make decisions about the Endowment Funds and make recommendations to the Board regarding the finances of Mitrata. They approve the annual budget before it is submitted to the Board for final approval and distribute a budget vs. actuals statement each month to monitor the income and expenses of the organization.

Digital Media

This committee oversees expanding the use of social media platforms to increase engagement and awareness of Mitrata. This is our newest committee. They have increased our usage of Facebook, blogs, Instagram, and LinkedIn. They also assist in developing our website and with marketing for our fundraising events.

Fundraising

This is a crucial committee as it has responsibility for determining and in conjunction with Mitrata staff, facilitating the major Mitrata Fundraisers - Trivia Night, the Holiday Bazaar, and Miles for Mitrata Kids. As a sponsor, you will be notified about these events, and we hope you will participate in them. A list and explanation of all fundraising activities is provided later in this handbook.

Board Development

Committee members ensure continuous improvement of board functioning by providing board training, recruiting new board members and assigning them mentors, and evaluating the board and its members. This committee oversees how the Board manages itself.

Executive Committee

This committee is composed of the Board Officers and two at-large members. The Board President chairs this committee. This committee ensures the smooth running of the Board, sets priorities for the Board meetings, and approves all items submitted to the Board for a vote. This committee may make decisions on issues that come up between board meetings.

Mitrata has also established a **Young Professionals Board**. YPB members participate as committee members, spearhead social media efforts, organize and run the Tower Grove Farmer's Market booth, as well as other crucial organizational and fundraising activities.

With the exception of the Executive Committee, we are always looking for volunteers to be on our board committees. You do not need to be on the board to be on one of its committees. If you would like to learn more or to volunteer for one of the committees, please contact Executive Director Christine Schutz or Development Director Alexis Mead.

It is important to know that we also have a Board presence in Seattle, Washington. Two of our Board members and one Advisory Board member live there, and because of them we have donors and sponsors there as well. Until recently, our largest fundraising event was a climb of Mt. Rainier outside of Seattle that took place in July. We will no longer be climbing Rainier, but the future may hold a different activity in Seattle.

Sponsorship events and activities

Mitrata provides many opportunities throughout the year to help sponsors stay informed, to meet and share with other sponsors, and to inquire about the program and how it works to help their sponsored child. Sponsors are encouraged to be as involved as

they would like to be, and to maintain contact with Mitrata staff to be up to date and have all their questions and concerns heard and answered.

Virtual Town Hall meetings are held twice a year to engage and inform sponsors regarding programmatic progress, the status of the work by BSF in Nepal, and other issues as needed.

A sponsor appreciation ice cream social is held yearly in St. Louis to express appreciation to our sponsors. This event also provides a time for sponsors to meet each other and share a little about what sponsorship means to you, and most importantly to join together in fellowship and fun!

A sponsorship table is set up at all Mitrata events as an outreach to sponsors and those who may be interested in sponsorship.

An Annual Report is sent to all sponsors to provide information on program and financial matters.

Sponsor letters to kids and letters from kids to sponsors are gathered and distributed twice yearly.

Links to sponsored child pictures and videos and written feedback from BSF about the child's progress are emailed to sponsors at least once each year.

A new sponsor welcome dinner is held yearly, providing new sponsors an introduction to Mitrata staff and board members, and an opportunity to socialize with other sponsors.

Some sponsors also choose to participate as volunteers at Mitrata sponsor events or fundraisers, or by serving on one of the organizational committees. If you would like to learn more or participate in these opportunities, feel free to contact Sponsor Committee chair Danny Williger and he can help guide you to the best resource to make that happen.

Fundraising Activities

Your sponsorship money directly benefits the child you sponsor. However, Mitrata has administrative and other costs that need to be covered, and so we hold several fundraising programs each year to raise the money needed to cover all costs. There is also an annual targeted fundraising drive to meet a particular need, such as expansion of the Contact Center program or funding a vehicle BSF can use to meet program and child specific needs such as medical appointments.

Please consider participating in some of these opportunities! Most events are fun, enriching, and positive. Some will also provide an opportunity to meet and share with other sponsors, and to learn more about Mitrata and how we serve the kids. Again, you

can choose to participate at whatever level you choose, though we always enjoy every chance we have to get to know the Mitrata family!

Trivia Night Mitrata sponsors one of St. Louis's largest trivia nights, with food, fun, drinks, and a small bazaar where you can purchase items created by fair trade artisans in Nepal! You can purchase a table and invite friends, have fun, and help them learn more about what Mitrata does.

Miles for Mitrata Kids is a virtual run, walk, bike or hike that encourages good health while raising money for Mitrata's programs.

A Holiday Bazaar is held once a year just in time for holiday shopping! Thousands of unique fair-trade handicrafts from Nepal are for sale, including fine jewelry, silk and pashmina scarves, ornaments and garlands, wool items and other apparel, and traditional Nepali items such as singing bowls and brass statues.

A booth at the Tower Grove Farmer's Market has been a great way for Mitrata to reach out and educate the community about what we do, and to offer bazaar items for sale. The booth is set up and maintained by Mitrata's Young Professional Board.

About Nepal and Why We Work There

To understand your sponsored child, it may be helpful to learn about the culture and history of Nepal. Nepal is a small, beautiful, and complex country. Like many of the countries in South Asia, Nepal was a land of tribes until it was unified into a kingdom in 1768. The monarchy existed for 240 years until it was abolished in 2008 after a civil war that lasted several years. Since then, the government has been unstable and fraught with corruption. Nepal is influenced by China to the north and India to the south. The Himalaya Mountains form a natural and somewhat impenetrable boundary with Chinese Tibet. Southern Nepal is a land of jungle and rainforest, and includes a wonderful national park called Chitwan. A tour of the area can include an elephant ride through the jungle to view animals like monkeys and rhinos. The rural areas all over Nepal have villages that are often connected only by foot paths. Some of our children come from these villages where the residents have a subsistence living and are mostly illiterate. These children may have relatives in Kathmandu and are sent to live with them to get an education and hopefully have a better future.

The capital of Nepal is Kathmandu, an old and historic city that currently has a population of almost 1.5 million people. All of our work at this time is concentrated in Kathmandu so that we can see the children we support on a regular basis. There is a great deal of poverty in Kathmandu and little infrastructure to support the population. Trash piles up on the street and people must buy water in large jugs as the water table has been mostly depleted. The homes that our children come from are usually one room with a Bunsen burner in one corner that serves as a kitchen.

The annual per capita income in Nepal is \$742 and there is a 22% unemployment rate. Malnutrition is wide-spread and infant mortality is high, with 40 out of 1000 children dying before the age of five. People live day to day. The easiest meal is lentils and rice (dahl bhat), with no vegetables or meat. We have been tracking the BMIs of our children, all of whom were low or dangerously low when they entered the program. We began offering two meals a day, and gradually the BMIs started going up. We all know that children cannot learn if they are hungry, so providing balanced nutrition is an important part of their educational experience.

The majority religion in Nepal is Hinduism and people celebrate many holidays throughout the year. The most significant time is Dashain and Tihar, which occur in the fall. The timing of holidays is dependent on the lunar calendar, so the dates change every year. Dashain lasts for 15 days and celebrates the victory of the Goddess Durga over evil. Everyone gathers with family and many of our children go back to their villages for a brief period. Tihar lasts for five days, and each day celebrates something different. On the fourth day all the houses are cleaned and decorated with candles, lamps, and colorful lights to welcome Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. The Nepali New Year is celebrated in April, which is why the school year for our children starts in April. Nepal is not on a Gregorian calendar and the year 2078 in Nepal corresponds to 2021/2022 in the US, approximately 56 years ahead. The lengths of months in Nepal are not predetermined and change year to year varying from 28 to 32 days.

There are no free public schools in Nepal. The government schools charge for books and uniforms and are poorly equipped with few seats and no blackboards or desks. Many schools lack toilets or a clean water supply. At the end of tenth grade all students take the SEE, or Secondary Education Examination. If they pass, they can go on to “college” which is grades eleven and twelve. If they do not, they can go to vocational school or get a job. Seventy two percent of the children in the government schools do not pass the SEE. For these reasons, we send all our children to private schools and that is primarily what your sponsorship pays for. Ninety-nine percent of Mitrata children have passed the SEE and have been able to continue their education. For grades eleven and twelve, the children choose an area of study such as science, social studies, or hotel management and attend a school that focuses mainly on these subjects. BSF employs a full-time counselor who meets with all the children after tenth grade to help them determine a course of study and develop a plan for their lives. After twelfth grade, they can attend University which is structured like our colleges and universities. If your child is able to do this, the costs for their education will increase and we will let you know what it will be. You do not have to increase your sponsorship amount as Mitrata has a scholarship fund and we can make up the difference in most situations. In private school all the children learn English so that by the time they are in 10th grade they are fluent and can write to you and understand your letters.

Many of our children are in boarding schools because their home situation is one that cannot support them, either due to food and housing shortages or because of family difficulties. For these children, Mitrata pays the entire cost of room and board in addition to the educational expenses. We also take care of their medical needs as the

families are not able to do so. The cost of medical care is much lower in Nepal. We also make sure the children get dental and vision care and will get them braces if they need them. For many of our children, braces have been life changing, enabling them to smile without shame. Our fundraisers are in place to give us the extra money we need for these kinds of expenses as well as other costs that sponsors are not able to cover. We will make every effort to keep you informed of your child's medical, dental, and vision needs, and you are welcome to contribute if you are able to do so.

Nepali people are warm and kind. The culture is collectivist and values the needs of the community and group over the needs of the individual. Interconnectedness and group cohesion are highly valued. This is reflected in the language as people address each other with family labels. Your child may call you auntie or mom as that is the category you have in their lives. Many of our children call each other brother or sister when they are close friends. When the people in a culture see everyone as a relative, it explains why the Nepali people are so warm and welcoming. We are all connected.

Ways To Get More Involved

If you wish to do more, there are many ways to contribute further. Here are just a few:

Share your sponsorship experience with friends and family. Word of mouth has been our most effective means of recruiting new sponsors.

Support our existing fundraisers. Gather a table of friends for our annual Trivia Night, held in the spring of each year. Participate in our Miles for Mitrata Kids, held in June of each year. You can run, bike, walk, juggle, any activity you choose, and solicit donations from friends. Purchase items from our annual Holiday Bazaar, and advertise it on Facebook and social media.

Volunteer for a committee or event. Volunteers have helped to set up booths, sell merchandise at our Holiday Bazaar, staff our Trivia Night, write articles and create memory books for the children who graduate our programs, just to mention a few opportunities.

Start an online campaign. Create your own campaign page on your preferred social media platform and ask friends and family to donate. You can do pretty much anything to fundraise for one or more children-- give up your birthday, ask for donations instead of holiday gifts, run a race or do something fun—something you've always wanted to accomplish!

Host a friendraiser. Think about a gathering that you sponsor for your friends or relatives; it could be your annual family reunion or your turn to provide Easter dinner or merely a meal you cook for your eight best friends. Briefly tell them about your interest in Mitrata and ask for a little donation. Start small (\$5) and you will be surprised how generous they can be. If you are uncomfortable knowing how much

individual people donated, merely provide stamped envelopes addressed to Mitrata and let us handle the rest.

Apply for corporate matching gifts. Many companies match the charitable contributions their employees make. For every dollar you give, you're really giving two dollars. And just like that, you and your employer have teamed up to double the reach of your generous gift.

Other kinds of donations. You can donate stocks and securities or a portion of your required minimum distribution from your IRA, you can include Mitrata Foundation for Children in your will, or you can donate other items of value.

If you have questions or would like to pursue one of the ideas listed above, please contact Alexis Mead at alexis@mitrata.org. We are a 501(c)(3) organization, so all donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Important contact information

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Sponsor Statement of Understanding **Mitrata-Nepal Foundation for Children**

Thank you for taking on such an important role and commitment to the Mitrata Nepal Foundation for Children. Without you we wouldn't exist, and we know that your contributions are changing the life of your sponsored child forever. You may have many questions about your role as a sponsor, and so we are outlining a basic description of the sponsor's role in the Mitrata Nepal Foundation for Children organization.

Role of Sponsor

As a sponsor, your contribution pays for the education, medical care, housing and support services for a child. Your money is paid to Mitrata, which in turn pays our non-governmental organization partner, Bhuvaneshwori Satyal Foundation (BSF) in Nepal. BSF and Mitrata work together to implement and oversee the programs for our children. Our mission is to provide the necessary resources so that each one of our children can reach their full potential and become independent citizens in Nepal. Our hope is that you will continue to provide support annually until the child becomes independent of Mitrata programs. We are aware that life circumstances can sometimes prevent that from happening. If you are unable to continue sponsorship for any reason, please notify us as soon as possible and know that Mitrata will still continue our commitment to the child and find other financial resources.

Sometimes children require additional services beyond a traditional school or boarding school sponsorship (braces, major medical procedures, mental health treatment, computer, etc.). Sponsors may be informed of these extra needs and given an opportunity to make a special financial gift; however, donations beyond the sponsorship contribution are never required. Any sponsor donations must always go through Mitrata and BSF and not paid directly to the child. BSF is in the best position to determine the individual needs of the children. Mitrata works closely with BSF to review these needs and final approval of these expenditures rests with Mitrata and BSF.

Beyond the financial commitment, sponsorship offers the opportunity to develop a relationship with a child half-way around the world. The degree of connection and relationship will vary from sponsor to sponsor and child to child. Some sponsors will be able to travel to Nepal and some will not. But everyone will have communication with their sponsored child via letters, photos, and videos sent from Nepal. As a sponsor, you are in a position of influence with your child. You must never take sexual or financial advantage of your position, use demeaning language or encourage illegal drug or alcohol misuse.

Mitrata Structured Communications

Sponsors write letters or cards to their sponsored child twice each year, and once a year sponsors may be able to send an additional small gift. We do not accept sending the children valuable gifts or cash money. The Mitrata children operate like a family;

what one sponsor does or gives is often reported by the child to the other children, and we don't want any of our children to feel left out. Mitrata will send more detailed instructions at the time when the letters and gifts are due. Photos are a particularly meaningful gift to the children who are eager to know more about their sponsors and their families.

The children will send letters and cards back to the sponsors twice each year. These communications are hand-delivered by Mitrata staff and board members. In addition the sponsor will receive photos of their sponsored child twice each year and videos when possible.

Informal Communications and Social Media

Children below grade 10 will not have much access to phones and social media. They are discouraged from its use due to safety issues and Nepali culture that prefers children wait until they are more mature before engaging in social media. Children in grades 11, 12 and up will sometimes have access to Facebook and other social media outlets through a simple cell phone. However, their access to these methods of communication can be spotty due to Nepal's unreliable internet and remote locations. The children in Nepal do not usually have an email account or a way to make phone calls.

We encourage you to develop a friendly and mutually beneficial correspondence with your sponsored child. Sponsors can provide personal information about themselves and their family that is age-appropriate and not distressing to the child. Consider communicating the type and level of disclosure you would have with a well-known co-worker, rather than what would be disclosed to a best friend or family member. A sponsor may also communicate with other children who are not their sponsees, as long as that communication is appropriate.

Be aware that children you "friend" or "follow" will likely see **all** your social media posts. Before posting anything, make sure that all posts are appropriate for the Mitrata children and persons of other cultures. Please do not friend any Mitrata children if you do not want them to see all your posts.

When children are communicating with you, it is sometimes easy to misunderstand what they are saying, due in part to language or cultural differences. If anything is said which makes you uncomfortable or concerned, please contact Christine. At no point should a sponsor agree to keep a secret with a child about problems or issues in their life. If a child ever asks you for money or gifts, also please inform Christine. According to BSF and Mitrata guidelines, children must go through the proper channels, i.e, the BSF staff, as the Nepali staff are in the best position to determine needs and coordinate the response. If a child's family member contacts you with a request, the same guidelines apply.

Privacy

We hope that you talk to other people about your sponsorship. This is one of the main ways in which we gain new sponsors. You are an important link into our community for Mitrata. We encourage you to talk about your sponsorship experience, your child's growth and accomplishments, the Mitrata organization and any travel you may have to Nepal. However, here are some guidelines about what **not** to share. Refrain from sharing anything that is exploitive or presents your child in a negative light. If you are given details of a sensitive nature about the child's family, do not make that information public. Please do not post your child's full name on any social media site.

Mitrata will share biographical information with you, but will also maintain confidentiality regarding issues of a sensitive nature. Mitrata will also sometimes share basic information regarding your sponsored child's health, education and accomplishments.

Visiting your Child in Nepal

We encourage sponsors to join our sponsor trips, experience the culture of Nepal and meet their sponsored child. We know that sometimes travel to Nepal is not possible for sponsors, so it is not expected or required.

On a given Nepal sponsor trip, sometimes a child is not available for reasons beyond our control, though we will make every attempt to arrange for a visit. Sponsor meetings with a child take place in the presence of other sponsors and the BSF or Mitrata staff. Sponsors will not be left alone with a child in a private space.

We discourage sponsors traveling on their own to Nepal from meeting with their child for the first time. These initial meetings can be uncomfortable for the child outside of a structured group setting and place added pressure on the BSF staff to provide supervision. However, if a sponsor has previously met their child on a sponsor trip and has been actively communicating with that child, then sometimes a special meeting can be arranged with adequate notice.

After your Child Graduates

Sponsors may develop a close tie to their sponsored child and want to keep in touch after graduation via Facebook and social media. Sponsors may also continue to send letters in the spring and fall if the student keeps in touch with BSF. However, for those graduates who have moved outside of Kathmandu, delivery of the letters will not be possible. Sponsors may also communicate with other graduated students. Of course the content of all communication must still be appropriate.

After graduation sponsors will no longer be able to send small gifts to their graduate, and the rule about not sending money directly to the students still applies. Our goal is to empower the students to become independent young adults and contributing members of Nepali society. If you become aware of a problem or a serious need, or the

graduate directly asks for money, please contact Christine who will relay the information to BSF. Their staff is in the best position to identify needs and resources and coordinate a response. BSF staff actively keep in touch with alumni who are available and if needs arise can link them with the appropriate services in Nepal. Although the graduates are no longer financially supported by Mitrata and BSF, they remain alumni and members of the Mitrata family. We will continue to provide guidance and encouragement and seek to utilize the graduates' skills as volunteers and mentors for the younger children.

Some sponsors have asked about leaving money to an individual student in their will or trust. This is problematic for a number of reasons. First of all there is no way to guarantee the proper delivery, use or safety of such a gift. In addition, large gifts (which may seem small to you) undermine the mission of Mitrata in coordination with BSF, which is to help the children become independent adults **in Nepal**. Nepali culture is such that extravagant gifts support dependence on foreign benefactors and create great inequities among the children of our Mitrata family.

If you are interested in helping beyond sponsorship, we encourage you to consider gifts to Mitrata, as this enables our organization to help all children in need. Please contact Christine about the options for additional gifts or a legacy gift to Mitrata.

Once again, we sincerely thank you for opening up worlds of possibility for the children of Nepal and trust that you will find sponsorship a rewarding experience as well.

Rights of Children

Adapted from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

1. A child is any person under the age of 18.
2. All children have all these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what language they speak, what their religion is, what they think, what they look like, if they are a boy or girl, if they have a disability, if they are rich or poor and no matter who their parents or families are or what their parents or families believe or do. No child should be treated unfairly for any reason.
3. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. All adults should do what is best for children. Governments should make sure children are protected and looked after by their parents or by other people when this is needed. Governments should make sure that people and places responsible for looking after children are doing a good job.
4. Governments should let families and communities guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights in the best way. The more children grow the less guidance they need.
5. Every child has the right to be alive. Governments must make sure that children survive and develop in the best possible way.
6. Whenever possible, children should know their parents and be looked after by them.
7. Children have the right to their own identity – an official record of who they are which includes their name, nationality and family relations. No one should take this away from them, but if this happens, governments must help children to quickly get their identity back.
8. Children should not be separated from their parents unless they are not being properly looked after - for example, if a parent hurts or does not take care of a child. Children whose parents do not live together should stay in contact with both parents unless this might harm the child.
9. Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously.
10. Children have the right to share freely with others, what they learn, think and feel, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms other people.
11. Children can choose their own thoughts, opinions and religion, but this should not stop other people from enjoying their rights. Parents can guide children so that as they grow up, they learn to properly use this right.
12. Children can join or set up groups or organizations, and they can meet with others, as long as this does not harm others.
13. Every child has the right to privacy. The law must protect children's privacy, family, home, communications and reputation from any attack.
14. Children have the right to get information from books, newspapers, television, radio, the Internet and other sources. Adults should make sure the information they are getting is not harmful.

15. Parents are the main people responsible for bringing up a child. When a child does not have any parent, another adult will have this responsibility and they are called a “guardian”. Parents and guardians should always consider what is best for that child. Governments should help them.
16. Governments must protect children from violence, abuse and being neglected by anyone who looks after them.
17. Every child who cannot be looked after by their own family has the right to be looked after properly by people who respect the child’s religion, culture, language and other aspects of their life.
18. Children have the right to the best healthcare possible, clean water to drink, healthy food and a clean and safe environment to live in. All adults and children should have information about how to stay safe and healthy.
19. Every child who has been placed somewhere away from their home – for their care, protection or health – should have their situation checked regularly to see if everything is going well and if this is still the best place for the child to be.
20. Children have the right to food, clothing and a safe place to live so they can develop in the best possible way. The government should help families and children who cannot afford this.
21. Every child has the right to education. Primary education should be free. Secondary and higher education should be available to every child. Children should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level possible. Discipline in schools should respect children’s rights and never use violence.
22. Children’s education should help them fully develop their personalities, talents and abilities. It should teach them to understand their own rights and to respect other people’s rights, cultures and differences. It should help them to live peacefully and protect the environment.
23. Every child has the right to rest, relax, play and take part in cultural and creative activities.
24. Children have the right to be protected from doing work that is dangerous or bad for their education, health or development. If children work, they have the right to be safe and paid fairly.
25. Governments must protect children from taking, making, carrying or selling harmful drugs.
26. The government should protect children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, including by people forcing children to have sex for money or making sexual pictures or films of them.
27. Governments must make sure that children are not kidnapped or sold or taken to other countries or places to be exploited.
28. Children have the right to be protected from being taken advantage of in any way, even if it is not mentioned in this Convention.
29. Children who are accused of breaking the law should not be killed, tortured, treated cruelly, put in prison forever or put in prison with adults. Prison should

always be the last choice and only for the shortest possible time. Children in prison should have legal help and be able to stay in contact with their family.

30. Children have the right to be protected during war. No child under 15 can join the army or take part in a war.