



**MITRATA-NEPAL FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN, INC.**

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**Sponsor Statement of Understanding**

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.