



## Namaste Children's Fund

"The Light in Me Salutes the Light in You"

Phil Crean and Cora Edmonds

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The SIMS social engagement project for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2013 is the Namaste Children's Fund (NCF) ([www.namastechildrensfund.org](http://www.namastechildrensfund.org)), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) charity established in 2008. NCF focuses on education for mainly girls living in underserved areas of Nepal. We have established a hostel and primary school for 50 girls in Simikot in the remote Humla region, with 10 graduates moving to our hostel near Kathmandu this year for secondary education and college in the future.

Our story (<http://www.namastechildrensfund.org/history.htm>) involves a series of seemingly random coincidences. A striking photo of a boy in Nepal taken by Cora in 2000 eventually brought her together with Phil, who had seen the photo and felt compelled to meet the photographer. The two of them married and, in 2007, returned to Nepal to find the boy and meet his family. Out of this trip, through still more apparent coincidences, NCF was established. But ultimately we believe nothing happens by chance. NCF arose from a desire to touch hearts, build relationships, and do what we can to make a difference in the lives of a few amazing kids.

Each year we visit Nepal and spend time with the students. It is easy for us to see the difference; with better nutrition and facilities (access to running water, bathrooms, beds and a tooth brush), the girls' faces shine, and their energy and wellbeing improves. However, the impact this project has on our lives is less obvious to us. The grind of emails, newsletter deadlines, financial budget reviews and general housekeeping can dampen enthusiasm. But our meditation practice helps ground us in the value of this moment and not the laundry list of to-do's. We can focus our energy, and with dedication and commitment the necessary tasks get done.

At the core of what's required to make the organization function effectively is the joy of lending a hand, of seeing the light in a young girl's eyes. Our western culture can discount the worth of human connection and inflate the importance of a to-do list. When we spend time in the girls' hostel and play jump-rope and Chinese checkers, the joy of being together softens our hearts. We are reminded that nothing is an obligation when it comes from the heart.

Our SIMS sangha fills the same role in our lives. Venturing out on a dark rainy Tuesday night can seem like a chore. The mind has many reasons why we could skip a class, but, the heart knows why we don't. The warmth of connection and quest for understanding lighten our hearts and enliven us.

SIMS has supported our endeavors since we started and we greatly appreciate this involvement. Currently, NCF is seeking educational CDs to support the schooling of our students, funds for maintaining our programs and sponsoring students, and hardy souls who are prepared to work in our Nepali hostel and school. We will be available at the Tuesday night sits until mid-October to collect contributions and donated educational (phonics/math etc.) and music CDs for children. After that, CD ROMs can also be dropped off at the Artxchange Gallery, 512 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S. in Pioneer Square, open Tuesday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and donations and inquiries can be made through our website.

Photographs













The NCF Simikot Hostel & School

