

# Charity launches new scheme to help kids of Nepal

by JONATHAN KENT

**A** NY Bermuda resident can transform the life of a poverty-stricken child for less than the cost of a cup of coffee each day.

That is the message from major Bermuda charity The ISIS Foundation, which today launches a new scheme to help the children of Nepal.

The Kathmandu Kids Club will raise funds for projects to help Nepalese children, many of whom are born into appalling conditions and are destined for a short life, bereft of health care and education.

At \$360 annual membership of the Club costs less than \$1 a day. And the organisers are suggesting a membership would be the perfect gift for people who "have it all".

The charity aims to keep administrative costs down to virtually zero, to ensure that all funds donated, minus only the cost of writing the money, go directly to Nepal.

Nepal has been ravaged by civil war over the past decade, as Maoist rebels have fought to bring down the monarchy and replace it with a Communist republic.

Last week thousands poured onto the streets of Kathmandu to demonstrate against King Gyanendra's "in defiance of the military 'shoot to kill' policy against them.

The constant power struggles since democracy arrived in 1990 have only exacerbated the problems of Nepalese children.

The statistics tell the story. Every week more than 1,200 children under five die in Nepal. The civil war has displaced an estimated 44,000 children and orphaned around 8,000.

The ISIS Foundation has funded projects in Nepal, as well as Uganda, for the past eight years, and its general manager, Leone Exel, has made many field trips to the Himalayan kingdom. She is all too familiar with the grim reality faced by Nepalese children.

"They have it pretty rough and the war has made life even harsher for them," Ms Exel said.

"Children who grow up in the mountains have a very difficult time. Around 5,000 children a year die of measles in the mountains because health care is so remote. During the winter months, they are snowed into their villages and they starve."

The Maoists control the mountain areas and try to separate a child from each family to boost their ranks, Ms Exel said.

"Parents send their children to the city, where they live with a friend or relative, or in a home run by people who care little for them, and they live there in impoverished conditions.

"We run three homes for around 140 kids in Kathmandu. We found them starving and destitute and riddled with scabies, or suffering from diseases like leprosy, cholera and typhoid. They really have it rough."

An added danger for naive mountain children in the city for the first time is their vulnerability to sexual predators.

Kathmandu Kids Club chairman Kim Carter suggested Bermudians consider buying annual

Club memberships as presents for loved ones.

"For those who seem to 'have it all', you cannot do them a greater favour than by giving them a gift which saves lives," Mr. Carter said.

For \$360 a year, which is less than \$1 a day, your loved one will receive a certificate of membership and, if they wish, a regular newsletter with details of how the money was used. Their name will be listed on the web site along with other members of the club, or listed anonymously if they so wish.

In addition to the newsletter, members will be able to get their questions about the Club answered by e-mail by one of our volunteer managers. And we will be running events at least a couple of times a year.

Extreme poverty is often defined internationally as "that suffered by people who live on less than \$1 per day."

"This Club is less expensive than that for members - it is less than the cost of a cup of coffee a day," said Mr. Carter. "What an extraordinary gift



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## In need of your help: Children of Nepal

to give to someone - the gift of a happy life for a child in Nepal, for less than a coffee a day.

Money will go towards a range of projects, all benefiting children, which are part of The ISIS Foundation's work in Nepal. This ranges from running children's homes in Kathmandu for young ones who have escaped the war in the mountains, to funding school teachers in a community school, and installing stoves and solar lighting in impoverished villages in the Himalayas.

Ms Exel said a team of around 15 volunteers had been working for a year to prepare for today's launch. Their efforts have included the construction of a very detailed web site, [www.kathmandukidsclub.com](http://www.kathmandukidsclub.com).

The launch will involve Club volunteers sending out e-mails to friends, with a request for recipients to forward it to others. Attached to the e-mail is a slide show illustrating the plight and needs of Nepalese children.