

Local charity will help children of Nepal

BY TERRI MELLO

tmello@bermudasun.bm

A new charity has been launched in Bermuda to help the children of Nepal, where more than 12,500 people have died as a result of escalating political conflict. More than half of these casualties were civilians.

"Every 11 minutes a Nepali child under the age of one will die," said Leonie Exel. "The suffering in Nepal is huge compared to other countries. Many children die each year of diseases and disasters, and the civil war has made things even worse."

Exel is the general manager of the ISIS Foundation, an eight-year old Bermuda-based charity committed to improving the lives of children in the developing world.

She is also president of the newly launched Kathmandu Kids Club, an offshoot of the ISIS Foundation designed to raise money for projects that will offer help to Nepali children.

Thousands of Himalayan children are forced from their homes as a result of intense civil war, and many end up in the capital Kathmandu in a desperate state. The children who are unable to leave the mountains because of poverty or lack of resources often die from easily preventable diseases.

By joining the Kathmandu Kids Club members make a direct and positive contribution to help children in a country ravaged by poverty and war.

The club is unique in a number of ways. The club is run entirely by a team of professional volunteers in Bermuda, which means there are no local administrative costs. One hundred

Facts about Nepal

Location: Landlocked, on the shoulder of the Himalayas between China to the north and India to the south.

Geography: vast plains in the south, fertile valleys in the midlands and high-altitude deserts in the north.

Population: 27 million.

Economy: One of the world's poorest countries, depends on aid and tourism. Tourism accounted for about 4% of Nepal's \$6.3 billion GDP in 2004.

Religion: 90% of Nepali people are Hindu.

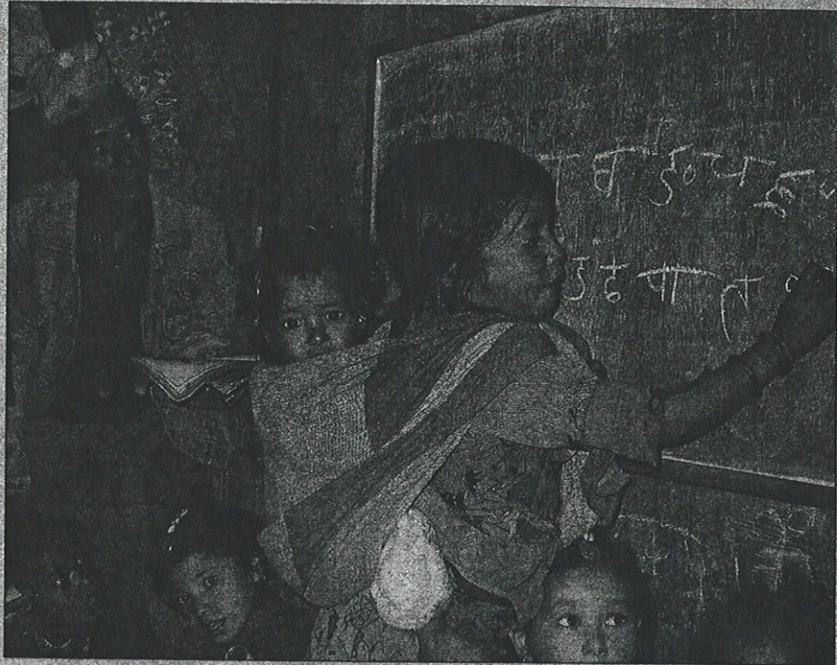
Roots of current conflict: In June 2001 King Gyanendra took the throne after his brother King Birendra and other members of the royal family were shot dead by Crown Prince Dipendra, who then turned his gun on himself. Maoist guerrillas began a revolt in 1996 in attempt to topple the monarchy and replace Nepal's feudal caste-based system with a communist republic. In February 2005 King Gyanendra sacked the government of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, declared a state of emergency and assumed absolute power. He said the move was needed to crush the Maoist revolt.

Grim statistic: Every 11 minutes a Nepali child under age one will die.

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per cent of the funds received arrive in Kathmandu undiluted.

"That gives the dollars the maximum positive impact on the children and the people caring for them," Exel said.



'HIGH' SCHOOL: Children taking part in a literacy programme run by ISIS in Humla, at 8,000 feet in the Himalayas.

The Club is also unique in its approach to sponsorship. "Ordinarily charities offer individual sponsorship of children, which can be administratively very costly... but our club allows a community of people in Bermuda to help a community of people in Nepal," she said.

Every penny raised by the Kathmandu Kids Club will be accounted for by the treasurer and posted to the

website for all members to see.

Money raised in the project will go toward a range of projects including providing school fees and uniforms, food, medical care and living expenses to about 130 Nepali children in Kathmandu; helping women and children living at shelters, all of whom come from backgrounds of extreme violence and deprivation; proving case work-

ers, family support and medical care to over 100 children in schools around Kathmandu; buying science and computing equipment and paying wages for three teachers at a community school and helping to run an ISIS home for children from Upper Humla to provide a safe haven from war.

Membership charges are \$360 per year or \$30 per month, which Exel pointed

out translates to just \$1 per day. The patron membership cost is \$1,000 per year. You can also make one-time donations in any amount you'd like. ■

THE KATHMANDU KIDS CLUB is web-based. Log on to www.kathmandukidclub.com to learn more or to become a member. You can visit the ISIS Foundation online at www.isis.bm/foundation.html.