



21st September 2020

Dear supporters,

As I believe you are aware, ChoraChori Nepal (CCN) will no longer be working in partnership with ChoraChori UK from the end of September 2020. Although this is very unfortunate, as an organisation we believe we were left with no choice after being asked to put the welfare of children in our care at risk, which is something that we would never be willing to do. The operational decisions taken in the UK have also been a source of disagreement and contention between ChoraChori UK's Trustees, and four of their six Trustees have left as a result of the decisions made in the UK in the last few months.

This year's major funding crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an irreconcilable difference of opinion between the two organisations concerning the management of the children within our care. Due to budget restrictions, ChoraChori UK requested us to provide residential care for the girls and boys currently in two separate shelter homes in one site, with a greatly reduced budget and minimal care staff, which we strongly believe would put their welfare at risk. Even this limited budget could not be guaranteed in the medium- or long-term if fundraising does not increase in the near future, and despite frequent requests over the last two years, ChoraChori UK have failed to transfer sufficient financial reserves to Nepal that would allow CCN to safely reunite children/provide alternative care if funding failed to materialise and the shelter homes had to close at short notice. These reserves are also a legal requirement when operating a children's home according to government guidelines in Nepal, and by failing to have them in place, CCN Committee Members could face severe legal consequences. In the case of a sudden lack of funding without any financial reserves in place, the children would be taken by the government authorities and be placed in any available children's home, the Committee Members could be arrested or fined, and the organisation and staff would suffer grave reputational damage.

CCN strongly believes that children belong with their families wherever possible, and from the beginning we have clearly stated that our shelter homes are for temporary shelter only, where this is necessary to ensure children's safety, to allow them to receive psychological support, whilst legal cases are ongoing, staff are tracing their families or for other urgent reasons. This belief is the result of over 15 years' experience working with vulnerable, trafficked and displaced children in Nepal, and is shared by major organisations throughout the world and by the Government of Nepal, with guidelines stating that residential care for children in Nepal should be a temporary, last resort measure. ChoraChori UK were insistent that despite the charity not having sufficient funds to provide quality care, we continue running the shelter homes, and it is our belief that this was due to the children being useful for fundraising purposes and to prevent personal embarrassment. This is not the first instance where we believe the safety and welfare of the children has been compromised for the sake of fundraising, as we have frequently been placed under extreme pressure by the UK to allow visits by unvetted potential donors and volunteers to our 'safe house', despite clearly expressing our concerns about this practice being in complete violation of our Child Protection Policy.

After long discussions, ChoraChori UK agreed to the closure of the shelter homes and to help find alternative care for those children for whom reunification is not possible (an estimated five children). However, after ChoraChori UK found an alternative Christian children's home, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the organisations made financial support for CCN contingent on the immediate signing of the MOU and urgent transfer of children to the new home with which we and our government contacts are unfamiliar, without fulfilling our legal obligations to reunite children where possible, conduct home assessments and consult with and

gain the permission of both the parents of the children and government authorities. ChoraChori UK also pressurised us to transfer more children than necessary to this home and to not reunite children with their families as they stated they could receive a better quality of education in Kathmandu. As an organisation we are firmly of the belief that children should not be separated from their families and grow up in institutional environments which are detrimental to their well-being and development and destroy family bonds for the sake of education when educational support in the community is possible, and the excuse of education has been a root cause of the increase in 'fake orphans' in Kathmandu over the past couple of decades. As a result, CCN's Committee believed signing the MOU was morally and legally impossible and unanimously voted to reject the MOU and pursue the reunification of children wherever possible, in coordination with our organisation's counsellors, and work with government bodies to find alternative, high-quality care for those few children who could not be reunited.

At the end of August, we unfortunately had to give all non-care staff (including myself) two months' notice as ChoraChori UK have not provided funds for beyond September, despite their previous commitment to provide funds until the end of December. Field staff are currently conducting home assessments and reunifying children with their families, and all remaining local reserves will be used for this purpose, and for providing ongoing care for those who cannot return home whilst we work with government authorities to find the best alternative care possible. Unfortunately, all other activities, including vocational training, have had to be suspended to ensure these vital care costs can be covered.

The past six months have been very difficult for us as an organisation; however, it has also provided us with an opportunity to review our focus and mode of operation. We remain committed to supporting and empowering vulnerable girls and young women and will continue to do so moving forward, however we believe that our priority now should be to work with girls and women within their own communities, to support the education, legal costs and counselling of those children who have been reunited with their families and to provide livelihood opportunities for vulnerable young women through vocational training. The rental costs of our vocational training site have been waived until 2022, and we are hopeful that long-term and new supporters will help us to continue providing the life-changing vocational training well into the future.

I would like to personally thank you for your support until now, and I would welcome any questions or concerns you have. Please feel free to contact me directly at any time.

Best wishes

Bhaskar Karki

Executive Director

ChoraChori Nepal