



## NCO Orphanage Support, Nepal

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*NCO Children enjoying Holi Festival*

### January–March 2019

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## Background

Nepal Children’s Organization (NCO) is a nonprofit organization that houses, educates, and shapes the future of hundreds of vulnerable children throughout Nepal, serving orphans, deserted or conflict-affected children, and dependent children of prisoners. The organization has a nationwide presence and is providing shelter to about 500 children in its eleven children’s homes.

In addition to supporting orphans and vulnerable children’s physical wellbeing, NCO seeks to create a family environment where they truly feel at home. For example, the children refer to the female staff who care for them as *Mamu*, meaning Mother, and RMF nurses as *Didi*, meaning Sister. This illustrates how the homes offer an environment of nurturing, belonging, and support, all of which are essential to the children’s emotional development.

## RMF’s Presence

Real Medicine Foundation (RMF) began supporting Nepal Children’s Organization (NCO) shortly after the devastating April 2015 earthquake, which damaged NCO’s main building, located in Naxal, Kathmandu. We initially provided support through emergency food supplies, hygiene, nutrition, sanitation, basic health training, provision of medicine, construction of toilets, development of a sick room, and a two-day workshop with American psychologist Dr. Ron Palomares.

## Providing Health Care for NCO Children

Currently, RMF supports two NCO children’s homes in Kathmandu, located at Naxal and Sifal, with 1 nurse and 2 auxiliary nurses. RMF’s nurses provide 24-hour, daily care for the children sheltered in these homes. Nurses provide both preventive and curative health services to all the children as well as staff of NCO. As a result of their continuous presence, they are able to diagnose children more efficiently, leading to earlier diagnosis and treatment. RMF’s nurses are especially committed to providing care for the children with chronic diseases and special needs, as these children are more vulnerable to infections and require special care.

In addition to providing nursing staff for these two NCO children’s homes, RMF provides regular doctors’ checkups to the children, as our pediatricians from Kanti Children’s Hospital visit the homes weekly. Children in need of more extensive medical treatment are referred to the hospital and accompanied by an RMF nurse.

## Summary of Activities

- 400 children were treated and managed by RMF nurses at NCO homes.
- RMF nurses continuously provided care to the NCO children.
- RMF pediatricians from Kanti Children’s Hospital continued to visit NCO homes on a weekly basis.
- Holi, the festival of colors, was celebrated with the children.

## NCO Patient Numbers: January–March 2019

S/N	Month	Treated by RMF Nurses	Treated at Hospital	Total
1	January	130	5	135
2	February	124	10	134
3	March	119	12	131
<b>Total</b>		<b>373</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>400</b>

Out of 400 children who were ill, 373 children were assessed, diagnosed, and treated by RMF nurses in the NCO homes. RMF pediatricians have continued visiting the Naxal and Sifal NCO homes on a weekly basis, which has markedly reduced the number of hospital visits, and the number of children becoming ill is decreasing with time.

### Patients Treated by RMF Staff at NCO

S/N	Disease	January	February	March	Total
1	Respiratory System	44	33	31	108
2	Digestive System	18	14	19	51
3	Fever	7	12	3	22
4	Headache	2	4	7	13
5	Musculoskeletal System	1	2	1	4
6	ENT & Dental Diseases	6	15	11	32
7	Skin Infection	12	5	2	19
8	Cut Injury/Fall Injury	9	11	11	31
9	Allergy	4	6	2	12
10	Eye Disorders	8	6	9	23
11	Other	24	26	35	85
	<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>400</b>

The most common health concerns among NCO children are respiratory problems, ranging from the common cold to chest infections and pneumonia. Crowded living conditions make smaller children vulnerable to these diseases. The next most common ailments are digestive problems, including abdominal pain, vomiting, and diarrhea. RMF nurses have been doing their best to prevent these illnesses by maintaining the hygiene and nutrition of children. They have also been working to maintain a healthful environment at NCO, especially in the infants' and toddlers' rooms, as young children are the most vulnerable to infection. RMF nurses also counsel NCO staff members on how to maintain best hygiene practices while working with the children. The RMF pediatrician visits have further helped reduce the frequency of these illnesses.

### Growth Monitoring at NCO

Growth monitoring is a monthly procedure carried out by RMF nurses at NCO, which is essential to assess the growth and development of children, especially those under 5 years of age. After measuring the weights and heights of the children, the nurses check whether they are within the healthy range for their ages. In addition to making sure that the children's physical growth is optimal, the nurses also evaluate whether each child's social, emotional, and vocal development is appropriate for his or her age. Children who fall below the normal range in these diagnostics receive special care, and the reason for the delay in their growth is assessed. The common cause of delayed growth and development among children is frequent illness, which has been significantly reduced since the introduction of RMF nurses, according to NCO administration.



*RMF Nurses Shriya and Bina monitoring the growth of children*

### Holi Celebration at NCO

Holi, the festival of colors, is celebrated in Nepal and India to mark the victory of good over evil. The name of the holiday comes from a story in the Hindu Vedic scriptures which describes how Holika, the evil sister of King Hiranyakashyapu, was burned to death while trying to kill her nephew Pralhad. Holi is also celebrated to promote healthy relationships between relatives and neighbors. It takes place on the first full moon of the Hindu month of Falgun, which took place this year on Wednesday, March 20, 2019. Holi is celebrated by people of all ages, castes, and creeds, who apply colorful powders to their skin and clothing, throw water balloons at one another, and spray each other with water guns. As part of their cultural education, NCO children celebrate all common festivals; this year, the children celebrated Holi with other children their age, which generated a lot of enthusiasm. The NCO director initiated the celebration by applying tika, or colored powder, to all of the children. RMF staff nurses also celebrated Holi with the children.



*RMF Nurse Bina celebrating Holi with NCO children*

### Success Stories

#### 1. Birendra Khadka

Birendra, a 7-year-old boy living at NCO home Sifal, suddenly developed fever of 101°F. Without an obvious cause for the fever, and due to the absence of other significant symptoms, RMF Nurse Ranjana decided to use standard fever reduction methods. She removed his outer clothing and applied a tepid sponge to cool his body. However, after 15 minutes of sponging, the fever was not reduced, so she administered paracetamol syrup for immediate management. A few moments after receiving the medication, Birendra's fever started dropping. The fever continued for 6 days, and he was only given paracetamol as medication. An RMF pediatrician confirmed that it was a viral fever and praised Nurse Ranjana for her accurate treatment. Birendra is doing well now.



*RMF Nurse Ranjana giving medicine to Birendra*

**2. Sunil B.K.**

Sunil suddenly developed a fever, a sore throat, and abdominal pain. He became frail and appeared very ill. He also became restless, which spurred RMF Nurse Ranjana to take him to the hospital immediately. At the hospital, he was diagnosed with tonsillitis and prescribed antibiotics. Nurse Ranjana and other staff members took good care of him, and he is doing well.



*Sunil B.K. in Kanti Children's Hospital*

**3. Laxmi Mahara**

Laxmi, a 15-year-old disabled girl, suddenly developed fever along with a cough and chest pain. The fever was high grade at 103°F and subsided only for a couple of hours even after administering antipyretics. Over time, her situation got worse. RMF Nurse Ranjana arranged for transportation and other necessary arrangements to take her to the hospital. At the hospital, a number of investigations were carried out. The reports were not alarming, but she had chest infection, for which she was prescribed antibiotics for a week. After being well cared for by RMF nurses and receiving timely medications, Laxmi's condition improved drastically.



*Laxmi Mahara holding another child at NCO home Sifal*

#### 4. Pramish Balak



*RMF Nurse Shriya giving medicine to Pramish Balak*

Pramish Balak is 1 month of age and weighs just 2 kg. He was brought to NCO home from Patan Hospital after being treated at the neonatal ICU for low weight at birth, during which time his mother fled from the hospital (a number of children are brought to NCO after being abandoned at Patan Hospital). Due to his low weight, Pramish is prone to developing recurrent infections and cannot gain enough weight. RMF Pediatrician Shreeram attended the child at the NCO home and prescribed him antibiotics, antipyretics, and nebulization therapy. He was cared for by RMF Nurses Shriya and Bina, and his hygiene was also maintained. Pramish was also immunized for tuberculosis with a BCG vaccine. His condition is improving, and the staff of NCO is satisfied with the RMF nurses for the meticulous care they provided to such a sick child.

#### 5. Rishav B.K.



*RMF Nurse Shriya giving medicine to Rishav B.K.*

Rishav is a 10-year-old boy from the outskirts of Hetauda, a city near Kathmandu. He belonged to a very poor family, and after the death of his mother, Rishav and his sister lived a very difficult life. The Police Department of Hetauda handed the two children over to NCO home after completing the formal procedures. He is happy to live in the NCO home, as he sees that many children are similar to him. However, after being at NCO home for few days, he suddenly started to lose his appetite, his abdomen distended, and eyes yellowed. RMF nurses immediately took him to the hospital, as they knew he had jaundice and needed immediate attention. After blood investigations, the jaundice was confirmed, and he was prescribed medicines for his condition. In addition to the medicines, RMF nurses have been making sure that his diet is nutritious. His condition is slowly improving.

## 6. Bikas Pariyar

Bikas Pariyar is a 10-year-old boy with a disability. After complaining of discomfort, he then started vomiting. After 2 episodes of vomiting, he said that he had chest pain. Due to the sudden symptoms, he was rushed to the emergency department of Kanti Children's Hospital late in the evening. Routine investigations, such as complete blood count, biochemical profile, and an abdominal ultrasound, were performed, but the results contained no significant abnormalities. Thus, Bikas was kept in observation overnight and discharged in the morning with a prescription of antiemetics. A few days later, he was fully recovered.



*Bikash Pariyar being assessed at the hospital*