



Text & Photography  
by  
Garo MINASSIAN

# Children of Kathmandu

“Protecting & Raising”



**Smart Pharma**  
CARE



« Accept what is, let go of what was,  
trust in what will be »

Buddha





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**S**mart Pharma Consulting is strongly committed, through its "Smart Pharma Care" department, to various projects to help the world's most disadvantaged children. This approach is part of our firm commitment to redistribute opportunities and wealth.

Since 2005, we finance various protection and education programmes in partnership with:

- Doctors Without Borders
- Handicap International
- Solidarités International
- Action against Hunger.

In 2006, we started our own programme in Nepal, with the mission to protect children from all forms of violence and to educate them to maximise their chances of becoming psychologically and financially independent.

The programme is financed and managed by Smart Pharma Consulting, with additional contribution since 2013 by FSNB Health & Care, another consulting company founded and directed by François Sarkozy.

**"Our main ambition: to protect and help our children build a better future"**

The Nepalese NGO Saathi ensures, on our behalf, the daily management of this project which today includes more than 200 children, and for which we employ 23 people on site.

We provide this global care for each child for as long as necessary.

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**Jean-Michel PENY**  
President - Smart Pharma Consulting  
April 2021



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**W**hen I arrived in Kathmandu, at the invitation of Smart Pharma Consulting, I expected to see faces of children marked by sadness, bitterness and anger at adults who had caused them suffering and compromised their future; to make do with silences, the only vocabulary of refugee children in themselves, cloistered in disarray and misery.

From the first contact, and during the few days I spent among them, I saw lots of smiles, even bursts of laughter, kindness, and an apparent carelessness. Children singing, dancing and playing. Schoolchildren making up for lost time. Students reinventing themselves and preparing their future.

In what is for them a "new" family, these children seemed rather fulfilled, eager to seize their chance. Proud to show me the reality of their daily life, to share their vision of a better world full of promise.

In front of my eyes, glances were offered generously and naturally, despite the painful secrets and scars that some features can still betray.



It was a wonderful challenge to capture reality while seeking to reveal what is felt, all the more as I was surrounded by cheerful, surprisingly open children. We quickly tamed each other, with modesty and respect.

The infinite bond they showed to the one they affectionately call "Father", symbolises this admirable commitment to protect and develop those children and adolescents who have declared peace. As they surrounded him, I saw serene and joyful lives extend their arms.

They all amazed me, touched me. A very striking moment, an experience from which one returns reassured about the part of humanity in us, and that only asks to be expressed.





**B**ecause a child's smile is priceless, giving it back to him is a fortune for the heart, a light for his life's path.

In Kathmandu, behind the majesty of the Himalayan screen, many of the shipwrecked of existence are in short pants and barefoot. Still children or teenagers, abandoned, mistreated, sexually abused, orphaned, trafficked or exploited, malnourished, out of school... they each have their own list of fundamental rights violated, of fragility, often the street is their only refuge, and the weight of their sufferings is their only baggage.



In this ocean of torment and tragic circumstances, there are, however, a few islands of humanity. The one with which I had the pleasure of spending a few days, includes two hundred people. Survivors of unknown or forgotten stories, they learn to reconnect with the simple beauty of life.

Human warmth, care, education, security, to heal them from their calamitous past, to give damaged spirits the hope of rebirth. To replace the furrows of abuse with wrinkles of joy.

The smiles that mark these pages bear the best testimony to this. It is also a recognition of the formidable road travelled in the direction of a new destiny, the ambition of rediscovered inner happiness.





**T**he children I met are brought together by their community of destiny in this program run by a team of 4 people. The boys and girls live separately in four houses that can accommodate about 40 children each.

Each house that I visited is led by a supervisor. Attentive, patient, he makes sure that everything runs smoothly. He looks after discipline, cleanliness, health, safety, logistics, the quality of the meals, the upkeep of the house, as well as the organisation of extra-curricular activities.

The maintenance of each house and the cleaning of clothes is carried out by two housekeepers.

To feed this little world, each house also has a cook and a helper.

A security guard, assigned to each house, ensures the safety of the children.



I also met a fifth group, that of the "Youth", which includes about 40 children who are studying at universities or training in specialised schools. These children are housed in shared rooms or small flats.

A unique feature of this children programme is that none of them is abandoned. Those who do not have the psychological or intellectual capacity to fly on their own, will remain under the protection of the program. They will be offered a job within the program, allowing them to help other children or caregivers.



I have found that homework is carried out under the watchful eye of tutors, who, every evening of the week, provide help and advice to those who need it. The children have 22 computers to do their homework and to take on-line courses.

Uniquely, among the many NGOs in Nepal, Smart Pharma Care offers "Youth" the opportunity to undertake university studies (e.g., bachelor's, master's, doctorate), or any other training leading to a diploma that will make them self-sufficient.



**F**rom primary school to higher professional or university studies, the children understand its importance. As the main pillar of their education and personal development, studies represent an essential component in building a better future.

The children are spread over several schools and colleges, according to their abilities. Saathi's supervisory staff, who do a difficult and amazing job, are very attentive to the children's serious attention to their education.





Children joining the programme benefit from a full health check. Then, every six months, they will undergo a medical check-up and a check-up by a dentist.

The children are also monitored by psychologists who are on duty several times a week.

Quality of life and hygiene, sexuality, self-esteem, stress management are all subjects of discussion, individually or in small groups.

These are all elements of support to help children turn the page on their traumatic past.





Extra-curricular activities mark out the week bringing their share of pleasures and personal enrichment. I participated in several of them and appreciated the abundance of talent that was expressed.

Some, musicians, blossom by playing tabala or guitar, and can take lessons with a teacher.

Singing lessons also mobilise girls and boys in large numbers. They love it! A teenager, inspired and a poet at heart, wields a pen and tries his hand at telling nepalese stories. While another writes songs.

Others find joy in soccer, ping-pong or badminton, the more skillful train the beginners.

Outings are also regularly organized, they told me...

Many people also like to be on stage. When they don't think they are aces of carrom, a board game of Indian origin, some express themselves through dance or singing or theater. Always ready and delighted to let go for a while.



In 2019, an ambitious program was launched to develop children's computer skills and enable them to acquire a good level of English, which is a must for their professional future.

Some children also spend part of their free time to social welfare projects in local communities.





As shown by these few quotes, these children still have dreams, wings of desires in the world of hope.

“Make my parents happy and proud”

“Give my mother the happiness, she deserves”

“Create an organisation that would help homeless people and orphans”

“Help children like us”



“Help the development of my country”

“Live happy and without fear”

“Buy a nice house for my family, with the money I would have earned”

“Travel, discover foreign countries”



## Become

- Journalist
- Doctor
- Soccer player
- Engineer
- Psychologist
- Model
- Hotel manager
- Singer
- Head Chef
- Teacher
- Social worker
- Fashion designer
- Nurse
- United Nations agent...



## Be

- A recognized person
- An independent woman
- A happy man
- A healthy person
- A generous and caring person
- A good and inspiring person
- A famous celebrity
- An inspiration for my younger brothers and sisters
- A good husband and father...

## To have

- A family life
- A simple life with positive vibrations
- Lots of money to help the needy
- My own home
- A happier life
- A small house where my family can live...





## Children's testimonies

"This is my second home"

"Saathi gave me all that a child can hope to receive in life"

"This programme is a wonderful gift because, in addition to feeding and clothing, caring and protecting us, it gives us points of reference to help us find our way, supports and encourages us"

"This is where I understood the meaning of life"

"I have acquired a sense of discipline, a positive mindset"

"Thanks to the whole team, I learned how to recover and stand up"

"The dedication of the counsellors, supervisors, cooks, caregivers, educators, facilitators... is tremendous"



"Here we feel as a family and in our own home. Our life has changed. It is comfortable, pleasant and safe. It is a great opportunity to (re)build a positive life."





## Some success stories among many others to come

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Sharmila, who lost her father and whose mother could not afford to raise her four daughters, joined Saathi in 2007. She is now a nurse at Norvic Hospital, one of the most renowned in Nepal. She has returned to her family and is able to help her elderly and unemployed mother.

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Renuka spent 9 years in this program, until 2016, when she started her professional life at the Radisson Hotel, with a bachelor's degree in Hotel Management. Married, mother of a little girl, Renuka currently lives in Australia with her husband.

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Ishwor, whose mother, a domestic helper, cannot support her two children, joined Saathi in 2002. He has a bachelor's degree in music, is in his master's year and teaches guitar at the same time. Ishwor has formed a musical group and makes a reasonably good living.

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Shyam lost both his parents. Not wishing to pursue higher education, he trained in catering. Having become completely autonomous, he is now a chef in a restaurant, and very happy with his living condition.

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Rajkumar, an orphan who was rescued in 2007, is currently completing his management studies and is taking courses to become an accountant. First "Youth" to complete a master's degree, he is an example for many of his "brothers and sisters" through his success in his studies, talent as a guitar player, and benevolence. Involved in social action with the most underprivileged, he also helps the youngest children.

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Tshring, who was on the wander, joined the program in 2006. Since then, he has obtained a bachelor's degree from the Kathmandu School of Fine Arts and has been working as an art teacher for the past few years. He is a painter, plays theater and is a tattoo artist.





**A** pretty page of life opens before all these children with singular, tormented and moving stories. The one they are offered to write with the share of joy that this "family of hope" brings or revives, by providing them with the favorable conditions to rebuild themselves.

During my stay among the children, I was able to measure the extent of efforts made by the entire team to open a horizon for each of them, to stimulate their motivation and to give them confidence in the future.

A delicate art, nourished by dedication, perseverance and optimism, for a noble and rewarding challenge.

I was equally delighted to see all these happy and impassioned faces, a fine demonstration of the progress made and the perseverance of all.

These children gave me a lot of warmth and adopted me in a spontaneous and unexpected way.

A great promise for the future that should light up stars...in their eyes!

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**Garo MINASSIAN**

April 2021



**A**fter 15 years of support during which we have endured the devastating effects of the civil war, the 2015 earthquake, and the no less terrible effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, we are committed to continuing our efforts to provide these children damaged by life, the protection and future that we owe them.

Our children are aware that their journey will be long and most often difficult, but they also know that we will always be at their side.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Saathi team for their total dedication to the children, and for having managed to support my level of requirements for so many years.

I would like to thank Garo Minassian for this testimony and for the moments of happiness he brought to the children in the space of a few days. The children were not mistaken about the sincerity and generosity of his work in this project.

Finally, I would like to warmly thank all the clients of Smart Pharma Consulting and FSNB Health & Care who, through their trust, allow us to "Protect & Raise" the "Children of Kathmandu". This wonderful adventure is also theirs.

Thank you again!

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**Jean-Michel PENY**



# Smart Pharma

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Jean-Michel PENY - President - Smart Pharma Consulting

[www.smart-pharma.com](http://www.smart-pharma.com)

+33611963378

[jmpeny@smart-pharma.com](mailto:jmpeny@smart-pharma.com)

REALIZED BY GARO MINASSIAN

MEMO  EYES

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Garo MINASSIAN

<https://memoreyes.fr>

[contact@memoreyes.fr](mailto:contact@memoreyes.fr)