

# Alumnae Treat Children in Nepal with Global Dental Relief

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***Katy is a global humanitarian at heart. She began volunteering overseas as a teenager and hasn't looked back. After graduate school and living in Guatemala, she joined the GDR team in 2012. Since then she has led over 20 dental clinics overseas.***

Nepal is world-renowned for Mount Everest, the tallest peak in the world at 8,848 meters. Most tourists pass through Kathmandu on their way to the majestic Himalayas not realizing that this city is full of wonders. Awe-inspiring stupas and temples, rich Hindu and Buddhist culture, UNESCO world heritage sites and last but not least the sweetest kids greeting travelers with a big smile full of cavities. That's where Global Dental Relief (GDR) steps in.

Since 2001, GDR volunteers have provided \$13 million US dollars in dental care to 78,612 children in need in Nepal. Hygienists, dentists, assistants and general volunteers from the United States, Canada and 23 other nations work in field clinics set up at schools in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Pharping. In a country where there is 1 dentist per 5,000 people<sup>1</sup> GDR volunteers provide the only hope these children have for a happy, healthy smile.

Alumnae Kesha Patel and Manjyot Rayat volunteered with GDR in Kathmandu last spring. For six days these two recent graduates and their team treated 795 children with much-needed dental care and oral health education. Hygienists Kesha and Manjyot performed 106 cleanings and 273 sealants! Together with fellow teammates, they provided a total of US \$173,620 in donated dental care to patients ranging from five to fifteen years of age.

When the volunteers arrived at the clinic each morning, they were greeted by a long line of excited students calling out Namaste. As the children waited to enter the clinic, they were gifted a toothbrush and taught how to brush. Next each child received an initial examination, followed by a cleaning and restorations, sealants and extractions as needed. At the end of their treatment, patients were given a fluoride treatment and their final oral health lesson



to improve nutritional awareness.

Before they departed the clinic, the children often bowed in deference to thank the volunteers for their help. Many of these young patients live in remote mountain areas and are sent to boarding schools in Kathmandu for a better life. They often walk for hours from home before getting on a bus that takes them to the city. The devastating earthquake of 2015 destroyed many of their villages resulting in lost loved ones, homelessness and more poverty.

Kesha reflects, "It was a wonderful feeling to use my skills and expertise as a dental hygienist to help so many in need of dental care. Interacting with the student volunteers at SMD was even more rewarding. Hearing about the journey they've all had just pulled on our heart strings and reminded us how grateful we are for all the things we take for granted. We've built long-term friendships with these students and they still keep in touch with us, which is so heartwarming. This was our first GDR trip and we could not have been more impressed with the organization. Manjyot and I are certain we will return."

Nepal is similar to the other countries where GDR works, where there is extreme poverty and limited if any access to dental care. As a result, a small area of

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Manj Rayat and Sara Ledwidge with patient

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decay in a child's mouth goes untreated until the tooth, or many teeth, are compromised. Without care, they suffer from chronic pain and infection, sometimes for years. Dental decay affects a child's ability to eat properly, sleep at night, pay attention in school and generally thrive.

GDR's model of care is unique – they are committed to serving the same school every 1.5 to 2 years to ensure that children have a healthy, beautiful smile when they embark on adulthood. In many of the schools where GDR has been working for over a decade, the results are clear. Seventy-five percent of the care provided is restorative or preventive. GDR volunteers are improving the health of children around the world.

GDR needs two to three hygienists on each clinic to provide cleanings, sealants and oral health



Kesha Patel and Taylor Charbonnaue working

education to children. Volunteers from all walks of life are welcome, - including dental professionals, non-dental folks and students - to join teams in Nepal, India, Guatemala, Kenya and Cambodia. Most trips range from 10 to 14 days including international travel, six days working in the clinic and sightseeing afterwards.

Trek part of the Everest trail or visit Chitwan



The Everest Range

in Nepal. Explore Angkor Wat and floating villages in Cambodia. Experience Antigua or Kayak on beautiful Lake Atitlan in Guatemala. Visit Northern India's temples and rustic Tibetan-like landscape. See elephants, lions and giraffes during a safari in Kenya.

Since 2001, GDR has hosted 2,859 volunteers from all over the world providing dental care and oral health education to more than 182,000 children.

Join a GDR clinic and change the life of hundreds of children! To learn more about volunteering with Global Dental Relief contact:

[volunteer@globaldentalrelief.org](mailto:volunteer@globaldentalrelief.org) or visit [www.globaldentalrelief.org](http://www.globaldentalrelief.org). ♦



Nepal child

#### References:

<sup>1</sup> *Density of Dentists*. The World Health Organization [https://www.who.int/gho/health\\_workforce/dentistry\\_density/en/](https://www.who.int/gho/health_workforce/dentistry_density/en/)