

## AMERICA - NEPAL MEDICAL FOUNDATION

(Fourth revised draft proposal for discussion)

### **Back ground :**

Being aware of the need to improve the medical scenario in Nepal, a concerned group of physicians and others from Nepal and North America have taken the initiative to form the America Nepal Medical Foundation (ANMF). This document briefly discusses the context in which the idea of ANMF was conceived and its relevance to our current medical needs in Nepal. That is followed by an outline of its objectives, organizational structure and an invitation for your comments, support and participation in this project.

We don't need to acquaint you with a detailed description of miserable state of health and health care in Nepal. Despite the continued efforts from the governmental as well as non-governmental sectors the fundamental health scenario has not changed as much as it should, at least for the average Nepali citizen living in Nepal today. Each year, hundreds of thousands of Nepali people, specially the women and children, not only unnecessarily suffer but lose their lives due to the lack of very basic medical care.

Although Nepal has made some progress over the last 50 years or so in improving medical care and the training of medical manpower, much remains to be done. A poor resource base, lack of visionary leadership, and an inefficient bureaucracy are some of the major impediments in our attempts toward making advancements in this field. To make the matter worse the ongoing brain drain, pessimistic outlook & opportunism and resistance to innovation are further compounding the problem.

The status of health of the people basically reflects the quality of life they enjoy in a given society or country. Sustained improvements in the health status of the Nepali people, therefore, will not be possible without resolving broader issues of contemporary Nepal, such as mass poverty, poor general & health awareness, social injustice, gender inequality, human rights abuse, population pressure and continuing ecological deterioration. Clearly, resolution of such complex problems is bound to take a long time. However, common sense tells us that we should make every effort right now to respond to the ongoing suffering and premature death. We believe that one of the ways to help improve this situation is by enhancing the standard of medical care in Nepal. In order to do this we have to augment the technical capabilities of our medical institutions in general and academic medical institutions in particular. Continued educational and research efforts are essential aspects in the process of building and upgrading such technical capabilities. While we should aim for and learn to optimally utilize our own existing resources and talents to do this, we must also explore the potential resources and seek new partnership to supplement our efforts in this regard.

Recognizing our inability to respond to our needs adequately, some friendly governments, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations and concerned individuals are providing valuable assistance to Nepal. Such assistance ranges from infrastructure development, transfers of technology and manpower training to patient care. The United States is one of the few countries involved in developing health care in Nepal. Besides the official assistance through the US AID, Nepal is fortunate to receive generous medical assistance from many private organizations in the United States: Interplast, Radiology Outreach Foundation, Asia Foundation, Arizona-Nepal Medical Society, American Himalayan Foundation, Pennwood Foundation, Nepal Youth Opportunity Foundation, Himalayan Health Care and Helping Hand are some of the organizations, to name a few. Similarly, there is a rich tradition of Canadian cooperation in the health sector in Nepal, especially in medical education and, to a limited extent, health research.