

BODHI TIMES

Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight
Founding Patron: His Holiness XIV Dalai Lama

June, 2008

No 34

Our goal is to improve health, education and the environment in developing countries by providing a hook, not a fish. BODHI was founded in 1989 on the principle of skillful, compassionate action and is neither religious nor political. We have supporters and advisers from many faiths. We encourage your ideas and acts of kindness. Realising the interdependence of all beings is in our enlightened self-interest. Now more than ever, if we don't work together to reduce the world's much-discussed problems, then who will?

Disadvantage, discrimination & health

Over-Forty Women's Health



Health education Photo courtesy Dr. Manda Mune

This project funds ten medical camps per year, reaching nearly 400 women over the age of forty who are facing or already experiencing menopause. BODHI's funds are being used for some medicines, equipment and publicity. Two female doctors and two female health workers volunteer their time and skills and some of the medical supplies.

Each camp takes half a day and is held at six-monthly intervals in the five areas of the Vishrantwadi slums in Pune, India: Shanti Nagar, Panchshil Nagar, Sanjay Park, Ekta Nagar and Rajiv Gandhi Nagar.

Dr. (Mrs.) Manda Mune, who is running the project, explains that doctors help to educate women about the causes, symptoms and danger sign, as well as the possibility and importance of early detection. In India, cancer is a common cause of death. Cervical and uterine cancers are particularly common, in part because of taboos and embarrassment about female health issues. We hope this project will help break down these barriers.



Mitini Nepal founders Laxmi (l) and Mira Courtesy Green Tara Trust

Skills Training in Nepal

BODHI has committed A\$2,000 per year for the next three years to a skills-training project for members of the female gay community in Kathmandu, Nepal, who face fierce discrimination.

Dr. Jane Stephens will oversee the project, in which members of Mitini Nepal will learn English and computer skills.

Dr. Stephens, a British general medical practitioner, has been working in Nepal since 1993. She set up the Green Tara Trust in 1999 to provide 'health-related services to some of the most disadvantaged children, women and men in rural areas of Nepal.'

BODHI has donated US\$5,000 seed money to Gaden Relief Projects (GRP) in Canada towards construction of a health care centre to provide traditional medical care for the 8,000 nomads, villagers and other residents of the Tashi Lhapug district, a remote area 13,000 above sea level near the headwaters of the Mekong River in Eastern Tibet. Winter snows isolate this area, a rough ten-hour Jeep ride from the closest health care, even in optimal conditions.

Venerable Zasep Tulku is the spiritual teacher for the area. He was born in Tibet but lives in Canada. He also has a long connection with Australia. We have known him for nearly two decades. In 1988, Zasep Tulku helped establish GRP (www.gadenrelief.org).

The current estimated construction cost of the health care centre is around US\$40,000. Please visit the websites of BODHI and GRP for further information.



Tashi Lhapug Health Care Centre

L: Woman who will be helped by the new health care centre.; r: Tashi Lhapug Photos courtesy Zasep Tulku (r) and Evan Zaleschuk (l)

Caring for our only home

Colin was one of only three Australians on the International Organising Committee (IOC) for the 6th United Nations Day of Vesak (UNDV) celebrations, held 13-18 May 2008, in Hanoi, Vietnam. The theme of the gathering was Buddhist Contribution to Building a Just, Democratic and Civil Society. There were eight workshops, including one Colin helped organise and chair called Care for our Environment: Buddhist Response to Climate Change.

This one-day workshop attracted over 100 people and 12 speakers from Vietnam, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Australia, Canada, Sweden, the U.K. and the U.S.A. Following is an edited report which Colin gave to over 1,000 participants from about 80 countries on the last day of the meeting. For further information, please visit <http://vesakday2008.com>

Climate change & environment workshop

Venerables, distinguished guests, friends in the dharma,

Thank you to the organisers of this meeting for the chance to speak with you. Our workshop was about climate change and the need to care for the environment. This is the first time that these issues have been so prominent at a UNDV meeting, and in particular I want to thank Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh for his recognition of these problems and his influence in having them placed on the agenda. The other reason that climate change and the need to care for the environment is on the agenda is because the problems are now so large and increasingly obvious.

The Buddha taught about impermanence and dukkha, or suffering. Nature has always caused storms, earthquakes and epidemics. But in the last two weeks, two events have clearly shown an extra human dimension to Nature: the cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the earthquake near Chengdu, China. The cyclone was made worse by sea level rise, caused by climate change, in turn caused by human actions. It was also made worse by the excessive clearing of the coastal mangroves for shrimp farms and firewood. These forests, if left intact, would have provided some protection against the storm surge that penetrated so far inland. The earthquake was made worse because it caused a large crack in one of the 40,000 large dams in China. Two thousand troops are now trying to repair it.

Collectively, humans are now a force of nature, but we do not yet have the wisdom to use that power well. Our group made five recommendations (see box).

From Vietnam Colin travelled to Geneva, Switzerland, where he had several meetings, including with UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation (WHO). In part this was to work on a UN position paper on climate change and HIV/AIDS, prepared jointly for UNAIDS and the UNEP (the UN Environment Programme). Following is the part of a preamble Colin wrote for a working group within WHO that will examine the relationship between emerging environmental factors and infectious diseases.

Sanitary revolution or new Dark Age?

Understanding of the relationship between local environmental factors and infectious diseases, such as dirty water and diarrhoea, flooding and malaria, and air pollution and bronchitis continues to develop, albeit at a much slower pace now than in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Meanwhile, a newer generation of influences on disease risks, particularly infectious diseases, is emerging at much larger, often global, scale. As human actions change and disturb environments, whole ecosystems and components of the Earth system (especially the global climate), additional forces are contributing to the emergence, re-emergence and spread of infectious diseases. Because limits to growth are denied, humanity is endangering human well-being on a global scale. Mechanisms of this endangerment include growing oil and food scarcity, climate change, deforestation and the loss of fertile soil and potable water.

Rather than the microscope, technologies for the new basic science relevant to this field include satellites, atmospheric and oceanographic monitors and computer models. Instead of theories of contagion, the new paradigm draws on concepts and terms such as 'anthropocene', 'Earth system', 'ecosystem services' and 'eco-social interactions'. These new researchers communicate by the Internet rather than the telegraph and printing press. Instead of coal, gas and electricity driven by falling water, we are developing solar thermal systems and fuel efficient transport, housing and lighting. Instead of guano and the synthesis of ammonia, we are hoping to develop effective gene technology. While there are many legitimate reasons for anxiety, these new tools are an extremely powerful lever with which to forestall global collapse. In the process, we might even spread the 1840s technology of self-scouring sewers (with egg-shaped cross sections) throughout the world.

5 recommendations for the environment ...

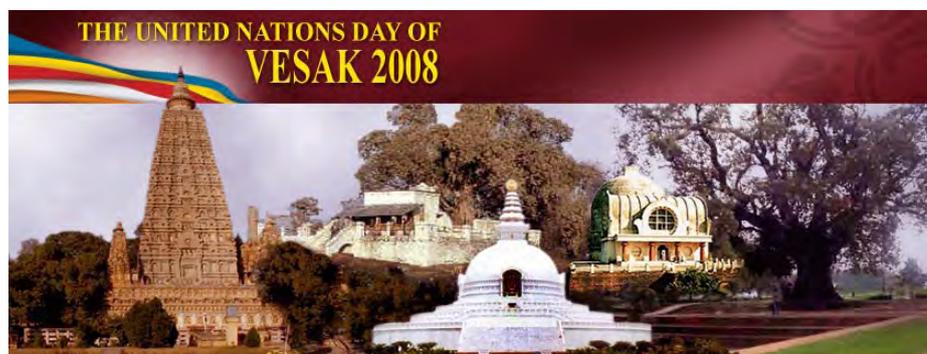
... made by the UNDV workshop in Hanoi.

1. That Buddhists of all ranks and in all places observe Earth Day each April 22, and try to make every day an Earth Care Day.
2. That Buddhists educate themselves about environmental problems and climate change, especially to prepare for the adverse changes which are inevitable and which are already occurring, for example by studying and embracing the principles of the Buddhist influenced Earth Charter. This is available in many Asian languages, including Vietnamese, Bangla, Burmese, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Nepali, Newari and Thai. Its website is <http://www.earthcharter.org>.
3. That Buddhists in all countries develop environmental leadership such as following the example of the late Thai monk, Buddhadasa. Buddhadasa rejected costly temples, preferring simple places to gather, such as under trees.
4. That Buddhists at the most senior level raise the issue of environmental care and climate change at the World Council of Religions where they seek to promote and participate in global spiritual and physical preparedness and response to these issues.
5. Finally, that these environmental issues be placed on the agenda for all future UNDV meetings and indeed for as many Buddhist meetings and gatherings as possible in as many countries and places as possible.

This unfolding paradigm has two essential components. One is of the interdependence of the global eco-social system. The other is its recognition of limits to economic growth (as that term is defined by the slowly waning but still dominant paradigm). The concept 'anthropocene' refers to this current era in which the scale and technological force of humanity rivals many natural processes. Humans are now a force of nature but as yet we lack the wisdom to use that power well.

We either stand at the onset of a modern analogue of the sanitary revolution — in which humanity as a whole recognises and greatly reduces the fouling and despoiling of its only home, our planet — or we may face in this century a Malthusian crisis of heightened mortality (initially, at least, experienced very unevenly between populations). The more extreme prospect — that such a crisis could cause the death of hundreds of millions of additional people this century, perhaps even ushering in a new dark age — renders the choice compelling.

An understanding of these contemporary issues and of the requisite new paradigm is now shared by tens of millions of people. However, for the moment it remains fanciful or unknown to most of humanity, including many experts. If the emerging global environmental situation is not as foreboding as appears, then the current state of global infectious diseases may not alter much. Even so, research into fundamental science of the kind here proposed will still yield valuable insight. But if those espousing the new paradigm centred around ecological and social sustainability are right, then the situation is urgent and this proposed work vital.



Bodhicariya Education Project

Through the Australian Jumma community, BODHI is in its second year of support for the Bodhicariya Education Project, part of the vision of the Shishu Koruna Sangha (SKS) in Kolkata, India.

SKS was founded in 1986 by social workers and engaged Buddhist monks. It is 'committed to educating the children who remain uncared for and bereft of opportunities for education, particularly in the tribal families.'

Dilip Chakma (see p 4) attended school at SKS.



Above: SKS students in science laboratory and, below, gardening. *Courtesy SKS*

Appointments

Colin has joined the advisory boards of three international organisations: the International Advisory Committee of the International EcoHealth Forum (<http://www.ecohealth.net/association.php>), the Scientific Steering Committee for a project with the Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP) concerning global environmental change and human health and, most recently, the International Association of Buddhist Universities (www.iabu.org). Colin is also returning to the Australian National University for a four-year, full-time position as Associate Professor at the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health.

The ESSP studies the ways that the earth system is changing and the implications for global and regional sustainability. It was formed following the 2001 Amsterdam Declaration on Global Environmental Change, signed by 1400 participants, from more than 100 countries (www.essp.org/index.php?id=41)



Sangeetha handing out cleanliness packets *Courtesy Sonal Singh*

Art competition in Nepal

According to her teachers, Sangeetha Basnet is beginning to develop a very keen interest in health issues. She is now actively engaged in the first aid activities of the school. She is part of a team under the leadership of the teacher Ramesh that is in charge of the school's First Aid Medicine Project, which aims to provide initial medical care for minor ailments.

BODHI organised a health seminar in the form of an art competition on the 5th of May for the children of the School for the Deaf in Kathmandu, Nepal. Ms. Kiran Sinha, BODHI's local representative, spearheaded this event. Mr. Ramesh Shrestha, a teacher at the School for the Deaf who himself suffers from this handicap, helped to conduct the programme. Around forty children attended. The subject of the art competition was personal hygiene and cleanliness, which Sangeetha introduced and spoke about. The students then drew paintings on this subject. At the end of the competition, pupils received paper, pencil, eraser, sharpener and colour pencil. On behalf of BODHI, Sangeetha handed them cleanliness packets with antibacterial soap for use in their daily activities.

Good gifts

Susan's cookbooks make great gifts: *Heritage Highway Cookery*, *Favourite Recipes From Along Tasmania's Midlands Highway (Mostly)* at the cost of \$20 + \$5 postage and handling and *Midlands Morsels*, *Favourite Recipes from the Heart of Tasmania (Mostly)* @ \$15 + \$5 postage and handling. Susan donates the profits of cookbooks sold through the newsletter and website to BODHI. Please contact BODHI to purchase these unique gifts.

Special offer: both cookbooks for \$30 + \$5 postage and handling (please apply for international postage rates)

Thank you

Bobbi & John Allan, NSW, Australia
Tom Bliss & Merrily Weiss, California, U.S.A.
Prof. Ken Cassman, Nebraska, U.S.A.
Dr. Kristie Ebi, Washington DC, U.S.A.
Dr. Peter Daniels, QLD, Australia
Pat Earhart, NSW, Australia
Dr. David King, QLD, Australia
Caroline Ralston (Nagasuri), NSW, Australia
Prof. Colin Soskolne, Alberta, Canada
Alison Wild, Tasmania, Australia

Special thanks to:

* Mr. **James Meyers** of Tarzana, California, U.S.A. for enthusiastic and passionate support
* Most Ven. Prof. Dr. **Lê Manh Thát**, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and the other members of the International Organising committee of the 6th UN Vesak, especially Ven. **Thich Nhat Tu**, Prof. **Elise De Vido**, **Henry Dang**, Prof. **Lewis Lancaster**, and Ven. **Dhammasami**; and also the hard-working **Bhikku Dong An**

and
Ric and Jo Easton at **Bio-Distributors**, Sheffield, Tasmania, Australia for their continuing, generous support.

We need your help

Thanks to your generosity, BODHI has supported many exciting and innovative projects. To continue, we need your help. Please send your donation, in U.S. or Australian dollars, to an address below. Contact us for details of direct-debit facilities.

Donations by U.S. and Australian taxpayers are tax-deductible

Australian cheques must be made out to 'BODHI Australia Overseas Relief Fund' to be tax-deductible

Founding Patron His Holiness XIV Dalai Lama 1989 Nobel Laureate for Peace

Medical Director Colin Butler, BMed., PhD
Dir. Electronic Communications Denis Wright, PhD
Community Advisers Shanti Raman, RACP, MAE
Kabita Chakma and Kulottam Chakma
Editor Susan Woldenberg Butler

Advisory Board

Roshi Robert Aitken	Hawaii, U.S.
Shelley Anderson	The Netherlands
Prof. Solomon Benatar	South Africa
Sen. Bob Brown	Australia
Sr. Mila de Gimeno	The Philippines
Prof. John Guillebaud	Oxford, U.K.
Dh. Lokamitra	Pune, India
Dr. Maurice King	Leeds, U.K.
Prof. Christopher Queen	Boston, U.S.
Prof. David Rapport	Canada
Sulak Sivaraksa	Thailand

Email: csbutler@sctelco.net.au, www.bodhi.net.au

BODHI U.S.
2743 Portobello Drive
Torrance, CA 90505-7309 U.S.A.
Tel: +1 (310) 539-2224

Directors: Colin Butler, Martin Rubin, M.D., Scott Trimmingham, Susan Woldenberg Butler

BODHI AUSTRALIA, Inc.
4 Queen Street, Campbell Town
Tasmania Australia 7210
Tel: +61-3-6381-1675

Directors: Colin Butler, Susan W. Butler, Denis Wright

We greatly value your support and keep our mailing list confidential

Printed on recycled paper

Human rights ... Community advisers

From its founding, BODHI has had an intense interest in human rights. This is illustrated by our preference to support minorities who face discrimination — Tibetans, Chakmas, dalits, and, now, lesbians. As support and interest in our work grows, we have formed a human right sub-committee. We stress, however, that our work is not and should not be seen as party political. We also make no comment on these pages or as an organisation, about human rights issues in Australia or the U.S., other than to note that numerous issues do exist. Bad as these are, our focus will remain on developing countries.

Activities in Australia

The position paper entitled, 'The Human Rights Situation of the Indigenous Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh' was submitted by BODHI Human Rights Committee members Emilia Della Torre, Kabita Chakma and Susan Woldenberg Butler on 14th March, 2008 to the International Commission of Jurists.

Among her many activities as Co-ordinator of the Jumma Peoples Network of the Asia Pacific and BODHI Community Adviser, Kabita Chakma is endeavouring to publicise and counter the effects

of bamboo flowering and the associated rat plague in Bangladesh and NE India.

Susan has learned the basics of working on the website and is coordinating activities in Australia and the U.S. This often means unwelcome nagging, but she carries on valiantly.

Medical care in Mizoram, NE India

Provision of medical care in NE India was raised at BODHI Australia's last Annual General Meeting (AGM). We have received two proposals, which we will discuss at the AGM in Campbell Town on 22 June.

Activities in the U.S.

The talk by Dr. Wafa Sultan, Syrian psychiatrist and human rights activist, at the Davis campus

of the University of California on April 9, 2008 was cancelled due to death threats and security concerns (see below). Dr. Martin Rubin hopes to organise another speaker.

Scott Trimmingham is trying to find a grant writer in the U.S. and is looking for possible grants for the Kathmandu skills training project (see p 1). Scott may be contacted at evergreentea2000@yahoo.com.

Community advisers

Dr. Shanti Raman will be engaged in teaching, research and activism in India, and based in Bangalore with her family. She has kindly offered to do some work for BODHI, which we are trying to co-ordinate.

As usual, Kulottam Chakma has been working tirelessly to improve living conditions for indigenous Jummas (Chakmas and others) in Bangladesh and Northeast India, which he visited recently. For a trip report and photos, please visit BODHI's website. See <http://kchakma.angelfire.com/tripura> for pictures of Kulottam's Tripura trip. He will post the Chittagong Hill Tracts & Kolkata pictures later.

We're thrilled to welcome law student Mr. Dilip Chakma to our Human Rights Committee. Dilip contacted BODHI after visiting our website. We're impressed with his idealism and commitment. Welcome aboard, Dilip!

New Human Rights Committee member

Dilip Chakma is a student at the National Law School of India University (NLSIU) in Bangalore, India. On 10 November, 2005, he and a small group of socially-conscious NLSIU freshmen formed Friends of the Chakmas (FOTC), a global initiative to campaign for support and solidarity of the Chakma people.

Dilip says, 'I have worked on papers related to 'third generation' rights with the main focus being the indigenous people of the northeast [India], a paper on law, poverty, and development, and another on the movements for autonomy in north-east India which is a hub of multiple ethnic diversities. Among other fields of law, my primary interest lies in areas like human rights and those that relate to law, poverty and development.'



Hate ... speech ... works

Dr. Marty Rubin, BODHI U.S. Director and Human Rights Committee member; works with his wife, Gail to counter the erosion of free speech in U.S. universities and colleges. He writes:

An old children's rhyme goes, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.' This is not quite accurate if examined from the perspective of hate speech, which is intended to invoke fear in others as well as incite people to pick up 'sticks and stones' and 'break my bones.' Hate speech works.

Cultural ideologies and leaders that encourage hate speech endanger us all. On university campuses, some student groups are notorious for their hateful speech and chants calling for the death and destruction of those with whom

they disagree. We believe in bringing speakers to campuses who can expose the duplicity of those who promote such rhetoric. We believe the right to free speech does not include calling for death and destruction as if it were a virtue.

Dr. Wafa Sultan silenced in Davis

This past April we had been scheduled to bring Wafa Sultan to the University of California at Davis to speak out as a voice of courage. A Muslim, Syrian-born physician, outspoken against the abuse of human rights in her native land, she has been lauded by the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine for her courage in speaking out against those who would silence her. Unfortunately, Dr. Sultan cancelled her speaking engagement due to death threats. For the time being her voice has been silenced.

We hope to bring another speaker next year. Will she too be silenced by death threats?

Improving planetary health, education and environment also means we cannot ignore ideological conversations that call for the elimination of any people or country. Our hope is to "awaken" people to the dangers of complacent compassion.

Lama Yeshe on compassion

As one of my spiritual teachers, Lama Yeshe, once said, 'Having compassion does not mean you lay down and let someone run you over in a Jeep!'

Having compassion does not mean you lay down in the face of calls for the death of any ethnic group or country.

Our goal is simple. Words of Hate ... not tolerated here.

Please visit www.bodhi.net.au for details and photographs of all our projects and activities