

BODHI TIMES

Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight

December 2006

No 31

Our goal is to improve health, education and the environment in developing countries using the strategy of 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?

Inculcating values with education

Population pressure, together with discrimination, continues to stress the land of the Chakmas, both in southeast Bangladesh and neighbouring parts of India. Increasingly, these tribal people recognise that education is crucial to their prosperity and even survival. BODHI is supporting Chakmas in Bangladesh and the northeast Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh (AP), where about 30,000 refugees were legally settled from Bangladesh in the late 1960s (see *BODHI Times* 28). Sneha, which means compassion, is the name of the organisation helping to educate Chakmas in AP. In addition to the usual goals, the school aims to impart compassion, love, peace and tolerance. 'We hope that Sneha's method of providing value-based education and inculcating values among the children will be replicated in other parts of the world in future, impacting globally,' says the Sneha School's founder, Susanta Chakma. Many of the 305 students in the school are girls. The teacher-student ratio is 1:36; in surrounding areas it's as high as 1:300.

BODHI is working with the Chakmas to develop a health education curriculum for the Sneha School that includes learning about malaria, a big problem.

BODHI began working with Chakmas in NE India in 2005. BODHI funded Rs. 300 of the Rs. 400/month increase in the honorarium of the school's five teachers, from Rs. 2100 to Rs 2500 and paid for an increased honorarium for the headmaster cum Programme Manager from Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 4,000. We also paid teachers' salaries for April-June, 2006 and funded library books for children and references books for teachers. At present, there are 700 titles and 775 volumes in the school library, in both Hindi and English. Lastly, we funded musical instruments, including harmonium, tabla, guitar and drumset. From 2006, music and drama has been included in the curriculum. 'It has been made compulsory that every child from class VI has to learn music,' Susanta says.

Thanks to a generous donation of A\$5,000 by Ric and Jo Easton of Biodistributors, Sheffield, Tasmania, we have increased this year's funding to the Sneha School. Please visit website for what Ric and Jo's donation is providing and for Susanta Chakma's full report.

Mobile medical camps & school supplies in the CHT

'Parbatya Bouddha Mission (PBM) is grateful to BODHI for their generous support towards the orphan, poor and destitute children and poor indigenous people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh,' writes Uttamalankar Chowdhury, PBM's General Secretary.

PBM used BODHI's A\$3,000/US\$2275 to organise 20 free Mobile Medical Camps at 3-4 areas in districts including Mahalchari, Panchari, Dighinala and Khagrachari. 'The Jumma (indigenous) people usually live in remote areas where there are no electricity, medical and other facilities available,' Uttamalankar says. 'To buy medicines and get prescriptions from physicians, patients must go to nearby markets.'

'PBM provides only primary healthcare services including medicines, tests and medical prescriptions as there is no major medical equipment. In each camp, 150 to 300 patients received medicines and prescriptions. PBM with its medical staff including doctor, paramedic, lab technician and others provided their voluntary services to patients suffering from such ailments as fever, malaria, cold-cough, rheumatism, dysentery, acute respiratory illness (ARI), diarrhoea, acute asthma and skin disease.'

BODHI's donation also purchased school supplies at PBM's orphanage, which houses 210 destitute children from different ethnic indigenous communities of the



Children at picnic and (below) girls playing football, Sneha School, AP, India

Photos courtesy Sneha



Dr. Suvash Basu Chakma examining Mrs. Umara Devi Chakma

Courtesy PBM

CHT. With our permission, PBM also made a cash contribution to a children's home at Maischari which was attacked earlier this year by Bengali settlers.

Rwanda revisited

We are delighted and honoured to welcome Prof. John Guillebaud to this column while Dr. Colin Butler takes a break to focus on his new job at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia, where he is helping to establish Australia's first postgraduate degree in global health (differentiated from international health). Prof. Guillebaud, environmental campaigner and pioneer in contraception, has been a friend and adviser to BODHI since 1994. He writes about a visit to Rwanda (where he was born and spent the early years of his life) from which he recently returned.

Readers of *Bodhi Times* may recall an article I wrote a couple of years ago on the 10th anniversary of the world's fastest-ever genocide (c 1 million people in 100 days) in Rwanda. I was born in what was then called Ruanda-Urundi. When my father Peter along with Eustace Kajuga and other Rwandan teachers together opened the first Protestant secondary school in the northern country, my sister Meg and I grew up with Eustace's children Husi and Wilberforce — speaking Kinyarwanda in preference to English. Sadly, the bodies of my friend Husi and his (Belgian) wife, also of Wilberforce's wife and 3 children and Eustace himself are among 250,000 in the mass grave at the Genocide Memorial museum in Kigali, which I have just visited.

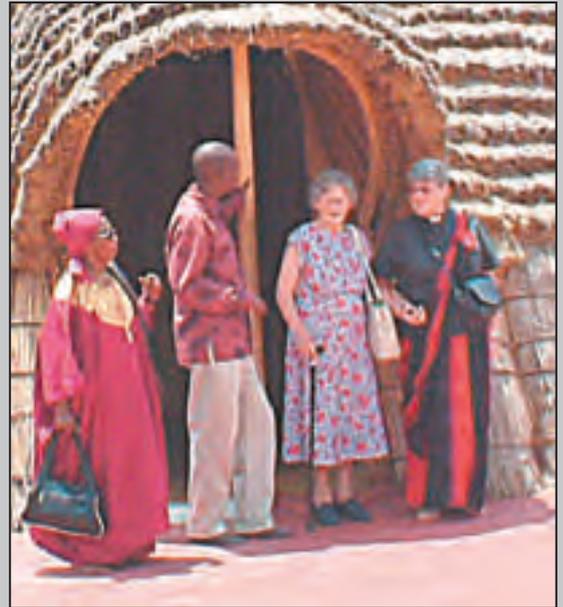
Our family has 5 generations of association with the Region, starting with my grandfather who in 1925 produced the very first Grammar for the language and translated most of the Bible. My parents and several of my aunts then spent the major part of their working lives in the field of education and literature translation, from 1939 into the late 1980s. In 1995 my parents returned to Rwanda to assist in post-genocide reconciliation work. After my father's death my mother worked (alongside my sister Rev Meg Guillebaud) in Byumba, an hour's drive north of Kigali, until she also died at the age of 86, helping to the end the widows and orphans of the area through range of income-generating crafts. Meg now continues that work, along with writing, promoting reconciliation and teaching Church leaders of the local Diocese.

Our nephew Simon works with wife Lizzie among the young people of the troubled country of Burundi to the south; and, since December last, young Zac their firstborn begins generation 5!

My own latest visit to the region, this October, was in a party comprising: my aunt Veronica — last surviving sister of my Dad, now 86, who herself assisted in translation work in the 1950s but had also as a child aged 6 been on safaris in Rwanda with my grandparents during the pioneering 1920s; Jonathan my eldest son; and sister Meg our stalwart local host, guide, chauffeur and translator). Our journey had many purposes, including:

◇ To celebrate the 60th Anniversary of my father's founding of Shyogwe Secondary School, which we found to be a thriving institution of 850 pupils (many trilingual in French, English and Kinyarwanda) who gathered for a special school assembly in which we were Guests of Honour. As well as many speeches, a specially written ode to the Founder was read to us by a senior pupil — though we squirmed, as he certainly would have, when he was referred to as "St Peter". Somewhat garbled historically, but probably not we thought representative of Shyogwe's teaching excellence!

◇ To donate to the National Museum three unique watercolours of King Musinga's Court



that were painted in 1927 by my grandmother, in the presence of the British Ambassador and the Rwandan Minister of Culture — and with the accompaniment of the exuberant drumming and dancing of the Urungangazi cultural troupe. We learned that these seem to be the only colour representations in existence and as such the Minister declared them of great historical and cultural significance. Indeed, when next day we visited the site where the now long-gone thatched palace (an ultra large hut for King Musinga with many smaller huts for his wives and retainers) had been recreated for tourists, the local guide agreed at once that their own blueprint for the Court buildings must have been wrong ... The paintings show a much higher surrounding stockade and he planned to suggest that this would be corrected in due course.

◇ To open a building in Byumba housing a craft workshop, small sales outlet and meeting-rooms for the many impoverished widows of the area, in memory of my mother.

◇ To cut tape for a second time, in a ceremony to open a Library and Information Technology building in Kigali centre, in memory of my father.

◇ To meet the Minister of Health for useful discussions about the Government's new concern to promote family planning; given that all those who died in 1994 have now been replaced and the country is expected to double its population by 2050.

◇ To visit Urunana, the radio soap opera modelled on the Archers, which conveys health education messages within the story lines. Some of the well-known obstacles to acceptance of family planning were discussed, such as entrenched religious objections from both Catholics and some protestant groups, also cultural pro-natalism, the concept that the size of a group (tribal or religious) gives more political clout — and various local myths such as that the Pill causes permanent infertility. But Kalisa the Managing Director agreed that radio has the power to correct misinformation and even alter behaviour. Now the government



A/left: Genocide memorial, Kigali: below the slabs are 250,000 skeletons, including our friends in the Kajuga family. Also in pic are Jonathan and Christine (Museum Guide). A/r: Replica of King Musinga's domain with Husi's mother Marion Kajuga; the local tourist guide; Veronica; and Meg; Facing: typical Rwanda scene (in background); JG plus local schoolboy on Lake Mohasi ferry.

Courtesy John and Jonathan Guillebaud

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Guillebaud in Rwanda

of Rwanda is also in favour of promoting birth planning, it would be ideal to add discussion of that issue within some scripts — in a similar way to the messages about HIV prevention that they have been conveying for some years.

How is Rwanda, the country?

On the surface, remarkably normal. There are all the expected problems of poverty in Africa, but Rwanda has better infrastructure (including excellent main roads) and less overt corruption than adjoining territories. The Government has done much to establish security and to promote reconciliation. The infamous identity cards which caused the death of so many Tutsi have been changed so everyone is classified as “Rwandan”; there is no longer discrimination on tribal lines in schools; and there are commissions for reconciliation throughout the land in a genuine attempt to bring about national unity.

In an effort to deal with over 125,000 prisoners and with the judicial system overwhelmed after the genocide, in 2000 the Government decided to return to a form of the traditional justice system called *Gacaca* (pronounced Gachacha). Local administrative areas selected people of good standing in the areas to direct these courts and spent some months training them in judicial procedures. Large billboards all over the country proclaimed that ‘if everyone admits to what they have done and tells what they have seen then the truth will save the country’. The idea was that if people were tried in the *Gacaca* courts in their own locality then the truth would emerge. In 2003 President Kagame issued decrees freeing several thousand prisoners. These were first of all the sick, those over 70 years of age, those who had been children in the genocide, and those who had no dossier against them. Then a few weeks later another group of those who had admitted the crimes against them were also released. The rationale for releasing the latter group was that they had already served about 8 years in prison and it was unlikely that the *Gacaca* courts would impose a longer sentence.

Although according to Meg all this is patchy and slow, only working well in some areas, I felt that Rwandans were well on the way to drawing a line under the dreadful events of 1994. But will they be able to defuse the time-bomb of their own fertility, on track to so grossly exceed the yields from the fertility of their beautiful land, with its great rolling hills and green valleys?



BODHI as an umbrella

We're increasing our scope by supporting three projects whose existing donors do not currently receive tax-deductible status. In this way BODHI can expand its reach without diverting funds from existing projects, as (we hope) new donors who support these other projects will transparently channel funds through BODHI to their destinations:

1. At Easter, Colin and Susan met Ven. Zasep Tulku in Tasmania. We have known Rinpoche for several decades. His vision is that the Jamseng Healthcare Centre in **Zadoh, eastern Tibet** 'provide accessible comprehensive health care services to the nomads of Yol Nin Gar, of Kham, eastern Tibet.' (see www.gadenrelief.org/zadoh.html) Jamseng's support base is mostly in Canada (where donations are tax deductible) but supporters in Australia and the US do not receive any tax refund. Now they can.

2. We hope to support some Chakma refugees in the U.S., originally from Tripura, to support the Chakma school in **Kolcutta, India**.

3. Following Colin and Susan's recent interview on the Australian radio program Bush Telegraph, retired university lecturer Jaya Dharmasiri contacted us about children with Downs Syndrome in **Sri Lanka**. They need skills development aids, manuals and toys. A specially trained teacher and an aid need to be hired and a new school built. There are five fee-paying students and thirty more hopefuls, unable to pay tuition. Extra funds would expand the number of children able to attend the school.

Other news ... Kabita Chakma has become an invaluable member of our committee ... We're investigating medical projects with the Chakmas in India and Bangladesh ... We are expanding our contact with the Chakma communities in Bangladesh and India and their representatives in Australia and the U.S.

Holiday gift idea

Susan is donating part of the sales profits to BODHI (and all generated from website sales) of her cookbook, *Midlands Morsels, Favourite Recipes from the Heart of Tasmania (Mostly)*. Please contact BODHI to purchase this unique gift (\$15 + \$5 postage and handling).

Thank you

Dr. Scott Bell, Tasmania, Australia
Ann & Eliot Bliss, California, USA
Meri & Len Goad, Victoria/UK
Dr. Stephen Graham, Australia/Malawi
Jan Heywood, NSW, Australia
Margaret Humphrey, Queensland, Australia
Donna Ingram, North Carolina, USA
Jill Jameson, Victoria, Australia
Prof. Hillel & Charlotte Koren, North Carolina, USA
Janice & Peter Laud, Tasmania, Australia
Mamie & Merle McGee, California, USA
Prof. A J McMichael, ACT, Australia
James & Charlotte Meyers, California, USA
Dr. Geetha Ranmuthugala, Victoria, Australia
Wanda Trimmingham, California, USA

Activities on BODHI's behalf. **John Bell** of Tasmania spent some of his holiday time in Australia's warm north enthusiastically promoting the Revolving Sheep Bank ... **Leon Braun**, Communications Officer at the University of New England in Australia's beautiful country town of Armidale, has provided invaluable publicity advice to alma mater Susan WB.

Please visit our website for detailed information and photos from all our current projects

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

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1989 Nobel Laureate for Peace

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BODHI U.S.
2743 Portobello Drive
Torrance, CA 90505-7309 U.S.A.
Tel: +1 (310) 378-0260
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

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Your donations are making a difference

New Revolving Sheep Bank

With your support, BODHI's begun a new, second 5-year Revolving Sheep Bank. We've expanded into an area in Pala, western Tibet, adjacent to the trial one.

The new project also purchases 50 reproductive-aged ewes and nannies per annum from wealthier nomads to lend to four poor households within the community. Costs are the same as for Phase 1.

Donors' generosity and a grant from the Bridge Fund for US\$4,500 funded Year 1 of Phase 2. Funds for Year 2 come from the Rainforest Information Network and Dharma Gaia for US\$500 and US\$1,000 respectively. Our ever-loyal donors are provided the rest.

Trial RSB Evaluation Report

BODHI's 5-year Revolving Sheep Bank ended successfully last year. The influence of BODHI's Revolving Sheep Bank has been far-reaching. It has become the prototype of yak and livestock projects of other NGOs within Tibet.

Professor Melvyn C. Goldstein was able to evaluate this project in May. 'The nomad households involved have increased their herd size, improved their standard of living, and have started to repay their loans on time,' he says. 'Consequently, the nomad community now has a functioning revolving sheep bank as planned.'

'In our interviews with the nomads, everyone was extremely pleased and grateful for this program, whether or not they received a loan. They all felt that this program is the ideal way to help alleviate poverty for nomad households, because in contrast to a one-time gift of money or animals, it allows the household to develop a stable new resource base that they can maintain in future years. Both of the first two recipients said that they never believed they would be able to achieve the level of security and well being that they now have.'



Recipient milking sheep

Copyright M. Goldstein

'Similarly, both the local nomad officials in the trial communities, and the government officials at the next administrative level, the xiang, were also extremely positive about the impact of this program and requested that the program be continued by expanding it to other communities under their xiang. In fact, when we attended the annual Horse Racing festival in this area [where Prof. Goldstein handed over funds for Year 1], many nomads from other communities under the xiang came and asked if we could start this program in their community, promising that they will manage the resources well and not let them be wasted.'

'Empirically, the livestock data for the first 4 households who received animals (in 2000 and 2001) supports this, even though the winter of 2004/5 was a bad one with higher than normal mortality.'

'Material possessions of each of these households has improved markedly. All now have solar lights, very nice furniture, much nicer clothing, and a better diet.'

Animal capital circulating indefinitely

'Not surprisingly, the local nomads understand that this is an effective way to improve one's standard of living and are eager to get a chance to receive such a loan. Because of this, all support the idea of mandatory repayment so that

the animal capital can circulate indefinitely. This has actually strengthened the authority of the two elected village heads who, as explained below, have had to make several tough decisions in managing the Sheep Bank.'

'The success of this project is dependent on the local leaders insisting that the loan recipients manage the animals well so that they will be able to repay the loan at the end of the loan period. To facilitate this, everyone, including us, agreed that it is important to select only households who are willing to work to improve themselves. That has meant that some of the poorest households have not been lent sheep because they, in a word, are irresponsible. Knowing these nomads well, I agreed with the local leaders assessments of recipients.'

'The success of the Sheep Bank, moreover, also depends on the local officials monitoring the recipients and making sure that they are not squandering the sheep by selling them to buy consumer goods or slaughtering them for their own meat needs. In our program this happened twice.'

'In one case, a very poor young man with a wife and two children was given a loan but was then discovered to be negotiating to sell them to outside traders. The local village heads intervened and warned him not to do that. When he persisted, the village leaders convened a meeting of the household heads and made the decision to take back his animals and lend them to another family. In another case, a warning to the nomad household was sufficient to change its behavior.'

Please visit our website for Prof. Goldstein's full report and photos.

How you can help

Make a donation: We still need US\$4950 per year for Years 3-5.

Media publicity: We've received good coverage on Australian television, radio and in the print media. We're working on publicity for the US and internationally. You can help by placing an article on the Revolving Sheep Bank in a newspaper or magazine — local, national, international, school or special interest. If you have other ideas, please contact us.

TO FACILITATE YOUR DONATION

Name _____

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Telephone _____ Email _____

Enclosed is __\$25 __\$50 __\$100 __\$500 __\$1000 __\$2000 __\$5000 __Other

For Australian cheques to be tax-deductible, they must be made out to BODHI Australia Overseas Relief Fund

All U.S. checks are tax-deductible

Please inquire about automatic deductions from your bank account

To pay by credit card (in/converted to Australian dollars)

Please enter your Visa, MasterCard, BankCard or American Express number, expiry date and signature below.

Either return to: BODHI, 4 Queen St, Campbell Town, Tas 7210 Australia
BODHI, 2743 Portobello Dr, Torrance, CA 90505-7309 USA

OR: Email your details at csbutler@tassie.net.au
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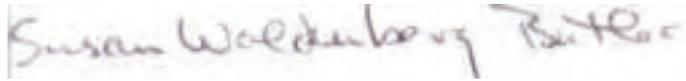
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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Dear Member,

Please consider attending our annual general meeting, to be held in Armidale, NSW at 183 Allingham St. on Sunday, 17th June 2006 at 2pm. The following business will be conducted: presentation of reports, election of committee members and officers for presidents, vicepresident, treasurer and secretary; confirmation of minutes from last preceding annual general meeting; appointment of an auditor; and reception of reports upon financial transactions conducted during the last preceding financial year. Please RSVP to csbutler@skyoptic.com.au. Directions may be obtained by ringing Denis Wright on (026) 7732479 or (026) 772 0557, or emailing denis@bodhi.net.au.

Kind regards,



Susan Woldenberg Butler, President

AGENDA

Opening of meeting
Apologies
Confirmation of minutes from last preceding annual general meeting
Presentation and acceptance of the following reports:
President, Treasurer, Medical Director & Director of Electronic Communications
Election of office bearers for president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary
Election of committee members
Appointment of an auditor
General business
Date of next meeting
Close