



BODHI TIMES

Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight

Founding Patron: His Holiness XIV Dalai Lama

Founded 1989

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Guiding principle: Skillful, compassionate action

Goal: Improve health, education and the environment in developing countries by providing a hook, not a fish

BODHI provides a framework for altruistic people worldwide who are not comfortable working in traditional religious or secular organisations. We ask only for a kind heart.

What does BODHI do?

We work in low-income settings with local partners at a grassroots level on innovative projects that fall through the cracks of traditional aid in the areas of health, education, the environment, micro-credit and human rights

In memory of Jim Meyers

Maternal & child health promotion, Nepal

Donations in Jim Meyers's name will be donated to the Green Tara Trust (GTT) in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal—tentatively for refresher courses and an event. Dr Jane Stephens



Dr Jane Stephens visits a mother, who is using one of the blankets Green Tara Trust distributes. Photo Green Tara Trust

writes, 'Nepal has some of the worst figures in the world for women and children dying in childbirth, lack of contraceptive use and specific vitamin-related malnutrition. Maternal and infant mortality are linked to young pregnancies, lack of antenatal care, no trained assistant at delivery and poor post natal follow up. HIV and other sexually transmitted infections are increasing rapidly. Nepal is 85% rural. These areas have much worse health indicators than urban areas due to poverty and poor access to health facilities.'

"The health system has little money. There are only 5 doctors for 100,000 people (vs over 500 in the US). Many health staff in rural areas do not come to work and have no refresher training. Health indicators and sexual violence have been getting worse since the start of the civil war. The only hope for change is a community-led participatory approach to health through health

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Mobile medical clinics underway in Bangladesh

Long-planned mobile medical camps have now begun through Moanoghar Mountain Home in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh, with donations of medicines from the Bangladeshi Government's Civil Surgeon's office. Three villages in the Rangamati district have been selected to participate for two reasons: their inaccessibility due to lack of roads and communications network and the fact that they are disproportionately inhabited by the poorest of the poor, the overwhelming majority of whom belong to Bangladesh's indigenous minorities. Objectives are to:

- * Provide basic health care services to the most deprived and poorest of the region's indigenous minorities
- * Raise awareness of the basic health care and hygiene among the communities
- * Link the communities with the government's health care system
- * Draw the government's attention to the public health situation in the CHT

Please visit our website for the full story.



Woman smoking at CHT market. Courtesy Philip Gorry

BODHI is now 20 years old!

We've no intention of slowing down. Thanks to you all for your support over the years.

See p 3 for New Directions

Current Projects

Literacy & life skills
Monywe, Myanmar/Burma
Educating Burma's poorest children



Mobile Medical Clinics
CHT, Bangladesh
Health care for the CHT's most remote inhabitants (see this page)



Chakma Mahila Samity
Mizoram, NE India
2 medical camps so far in this remote part of India



Over 40 Women's Health
Pune, India
Sex education, drug addiction & HIV/AIDS awareness added to cancer diagnosis and health awareness (see p 3)



Moanoghar Mountain Home
CHT, Bangladesh
Australian Jumma community support for this beloved school and orphanage



SNEHA School
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Salaries, supplies & health education & deworming to indigenous refugee children



Revolving Sheep Bank
Western Tibet
Micro-credit to nomads to help preserve traditional way of life (see p 4)



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See new website at www.bodhi.net.au / Become a BODHI friend on Facebook

Blaming the victims?

This is written before the Copenhagen climate meeting. As I write, President Obama has announced that no binding decisions will be made at Copenhagen, which reduces the likelihood that the meeting will be another brazen display of hypocrisy. Nonetheless, face-saving platitudes are likely to be have been uttered and more lavish promises made to help developing countries switch to cleaner technology. How many of you remember the Clean Development Mechanism, introduced at the Kyoto climate meeting in 1997? Almost 13 years later, it remains severely underfunded. Look back farther to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the year I wrote a *BODHI Times* editorial about the Demographic Trap: the likelihood that rapid population growth would ensnare some countries in abject poverty and worse, as indeed occurred in Rwanda two years later (see website).

At Rio, generous promises were made to provide “new and additional” finance to help Third World countries switch to more environmentally friendly technologies. Those promises, like so many others, were broken long ago. Seventeen years after Rio, time is running out. I feel like a hybrid of a broken record (or damaged CD) and a male Cassandra (see box).

Recently, the prominent and prolific British writer and activist George Monbiot wrote an essay in *the Guardian*, a major UK newspaper, called “Stop blaming the poor. It’s the wally yachters who are burning the planet”. Monbiot implied that people concerned with population are blaming the very poor for climate change (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cif-green/2009/sep/28/population-growth-super-rich>).



Cassandra, the beautiful princess of Troy, was promised the gift of prophecy by the god Apollo, in exchange for her love. She later rejected Apollo, who then cursed her so that no one would believe her prophecies. To this day, most people think a person labelled a Cassandra delivers false warnings, especially of gloom. In fact, Cassandra’s predictions were correct.

Monbiot, like many on the Left, has never shown much regard for or understanding of the compelling human rights and development-based cases to promote family planning in low-income countries. In his essay, Monbiot uses assertion and vilification rather than evidence. He starts by describing a statement issued by the eminent scientist and author James Lovelock, as “ignorant and irrational”. The statement that caused such offence was made recently by Lovelock when he became a patron of the UK-based Optimum Population Trust (OPT). Lovelock wrote: “Those who fail to see that population growth and climate change are two sides of the same coin are either ignorant or hiding from the truth. These two huge environmental problems are inseparable and to discuss one while ignoring the other is irrational.” Clearly Monbiot disagrees with this, and he reacts to being so grouped.

Rather than explain his objections to Lovelock’s statement, Monbiot seems to jump to the conclusion

that Lovelock and perhaps the OPT are attributing a substantial fraction of the responsibility for climate change to the poorest of the global population, which has the highest birth rate—people such as famine-plagued peasants in Ethiopia. It is very important to point out that there is no credible argument in the scientific literature to support the gist of this assertion. That a writer of Monbiot’s visibility can make this claim is disturbing. Mud can stick. If such a victim-blaming perception were to spread, it would hurt the small sector of the environmental movement with the courage to raise the sensitive and contentious issue of population.

It is true that the 2007 OPT briefing paper “A Population-Based Climate Strategy” is not explicit about the obvious fact that the climatic footprint of the extremely poor (the fourth “claste”) is very low, compared to that of the first and second clastes (see *BODHI Times No 14*). But the briefing paper makes no such claim, and such an interpretation would be highly imaginative. Monbiot also describes the OPT as “one of dozens of campaigns and charities whose sole purpose is to discourage people from breeding in the name of saving the biosphere”. This is gratuitous. The OPT statement is clear that population limitation, from a climate-causing perspective, is most important in “developed nations such as the UK because of their higher consumption levels”. Indeed, the high population growth rates of Australia and the US—still the world’s leading per capita greenhouse gas emitters—show the importance of the OPT case.

I interpreted Lovelock’s full statement (<http://www.optimumpopulation.org/releases/opt.release26Aug09.htm>) differently than did Monbiot. As I see it, the world has three groups. The first group (the first and second clastes) is very successful at consumption. Most are group-centric, selfish, short-sighted and blind to the warnings of science. They also drive policies which ignore or at least discount the poor. Group 2 (the bulk of the world’s population, the third claste) are not yet high consumers, though they are increasing their footprint. Many live in India and China, countries in which a lot of the coal burned is used to produce goods for Group 1.

Members of Group 2 are gradually making a substantial contribution to climate change, but at a far lower per-person rate than the first group. Group 2’s population growth rate is falling rapidly. Then there is a third group. Group 3 seriously underconsume, still have high fertility and are very vulnerable to the harmful effects of climate change.



The persistence of memory, Salvador Dali

I am unaware of any evidence that environmental or population activists, including the OPT, link this group with *causing* climate change.

All groups live on the same planet. Group 1 mostly think Group 3 is responsible for its own plight, or is a resource to be plundered for their benefit. Indifference to the fertility dynamics of Group 3 is part of Group 1’s world view. In that way, overconsumption and overpopulation are two apples from the same tree. However, the OPT statement does not make this distinction sufficiently clear, leaving itself vulnerable to the interpretation of people like Monbiot.

There is another way in which climate change is relevant to population and population growth. In November, the Bulletin of the World Health Organisation published a paper to which I contributed concerning the harmful impact of rapid population growth in very poor countries, in the context of climate change (<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/87/11/08-062562.pdf>). For some time, developing countries have been encouraged to submit National [climate change] Adaptation Programmes of Action to the Global Environmental Facility. Two of my co-authors, based in London, analysed the first 40 reports, received until April, 2009. Of these, 37 said rapid population growth exacerbated attempts at adaptation to climate change.

Our paper stresses that neither the population size or growth of the poor is in any way responsible for present levels of climate change; instead we argue that poor societies with high population growth rates are headed for more trouble and that climate change will exacerbate these problems.

Hilary Clinton is said to have raised the issue of India’s population with the Indian Minister for Environment, Jairam Ramesh (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/aug/28/india-population-climate-change>). Australia, too, is now on track for 35 million people by 2050, up 60% from its current number. Prime Minister Rudd has hinted that it should receive a special deal because of its growth. If true, such a claim would be quite consistent with recent Australian policies, which pretend to be high-minded and internationalist but in fact are myopic and deeply selfish. Australia can undoubtedly support a higher population, but the world should not have to shoulder the larger ecological footprint this will generate. This is inevitable if Australia continues its current climate change and consumption policies of Promise Much, Achieve Little.



Suresh Bauddha, founder, Youth Buddhist Society

New directions for BODHI at 20?

We're always evaluating and questioning our projects and directions. We're mull over absorptive capacity, or the amount of funds that grassroots organisations are able to use effectively. Can they grow? How much? There are limits to the speed of such growth. As we grapple with these issues, recent travels have inspired Colin to suggest that BODHI consider two new directions. It's very early days for both of these potential projects. We welcome your involvement as we grow and expand.

SCHOLARSHIPS IN THAILAND

From talks between Colin and Prof Bruce Wilcox (http://www.ecohealth.net/www_bruceawilcox.php) has arisen the idea of BODHI providing educational scholarships of A\$1,000/US\$990 each year to five promising indigenous Hill Tribe students for the Mae Fah Luang University in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Prof Wilcox says, "It is essential that we build capacity in this region, and this requires fighting the tide of exodus of good students, faculty and health care workers to Bangkok and other major urban centres." The area is experiencing a resurgence of HIV/AIDS.

YOUTH BUDDHIST SOCIETY

In August, 2009, Colin visited the Youth Buddhist Society (YBS) in Mainpuri, six hours by train from Delhi toward Kanpur, with Sari Kovats of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and SNEHA's Susanta Chakma. They visited many schools, nurtured and partly supported by YBS, which in total educate about 3,750 poor boys and girls in villages in Uttar Pradesh. The schools were built in the absence of sufficient state schools and funded by local farmers and villagers. The teachers are not fully qualified. Their salary is about INR 2,000 per month; state schoolteachers receive INR 10,000.

Colin hopes to return to Delhi and Mainpuri in 2010 to participate in a workshop to improve teachers' skills. BODHI would allocate A\$10,000 per annum to upgrade teachers' skills and purchase furnishings, library books and other school materials. We are considering food supplementation for students of two eggs each week. The eating of eggs is almost zero.

What's new

SNEHA SCIENCE LAB. BODHI is stocking a science laboratory at the SNEHA School in Diyun, Arunachal Pradesh, India.

OVER-40 WOMEN'S HEALTH. We are now helping 2,500 people by adding sex, drug addiction and HIV/AIDS education to the cancer diagnosis and health awareness through self-examination camps that Dr Manda Mune and her team run in eight Pune slums and a tribal village. Sex education is offered through residential camps for school and college students as well as dropouts in the community.

CONTINUING EDUCATION. BODHI is partially funding Dr Manda Mune of the Over 40 Women's Health Project to visit Kathmandu, Nepal in March, 2010 to learn about health promotion from Dr Jane Stephens of the Green Tara Trust.

NEW WEBSITE. Finally! It's finished, to our great relief. Graphic Ark (www.graphicark.com.au) donated the design and much of the production help. Denis and Susan laboured night and day for months. We hope you like it.

BODHI ON FACEBOOK. We now have a presence on Facebook, open to all.

Current Projects

cont fr p 1

Mitini Nepal English & Computer Skills Training Kathmandu, Nepal
Skills training for Nepalese lesbians



Health for Under-nourished Tribal Children Pune, India

Medical & nutritional help to slum children, awareness of family planning & early girl child marriages



Green Tara Trust Kathmandu Valley, Nepal

Health services for Nepal's most disadvantaged & maternal & child health (see main story p 1)



Tashi Lhapug Health Care Centre Eastern Tibet

Seed funds for a traditional health clinic in remote Eastern Tibet, for medical care to 8,000 people



Udana Special Children's Centre Colombo, Sri Lanka

Support for a school for children with physical and learning disabilities



Train the Trainer Kathmandu, Nepal

Pilot to increase literacy & health awareness among hearing impaired children



Please see website for project details

Thank you

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We need your help

Thanks to your generosity, BODHI has supported many exciting and innovative projects. To continue, we need your help.

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

Also available: Direct-debit facilities (contact us) and PayPal in both U.S. & Australian dollars

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

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5-year trial in Tibet

Revolving Sheep Bank

Prof Goldstein and Susan spoke at length about the Revolving Sheep Bank in August. The Revolving Sheep Bank is fantastically successful,' he said. 'Nomads in the far west, near the Indian border, have travelled many miles to the area to learn more about it.' The trial project has also been successfully adopted by other NGOs working in Tibet. Here's Prof. Goldstein's edited report.

In August, 2005 and June 2009, my colleagues Dr. Cynthia Beall and Dr. Ben Jiao and I conducted an assessment of the 5 year trial Revolving Sheep Bank program in the two xiang (rural townships) where we conducted our research: Nyingo and Khunglung. The project assisted around 120 Tibetan nomads living in two communities in Ngamring county.

The goals of the Revolving Sheep Bank were:

1. To provide poor nomad families with a five-year loan of reproductive age female sheep in order to foster their moving from poverty or near-poverty to economic self-sufficiency.
2. To simultaneously create a self-perpetuating 'sheep bank' that will provide each of the two participating communities with a capital fund of 100 fertile female sheep at the end of 5 years and thereby enable it to continue to lend sheep to poor households after the end of the trial period.

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

The 5 year trial Revolving Sheep Bank was begun in August 2000 in two nomad xiang. Each year, 4 poor nomad households (2 in each xiang) were given a loan of 50 high quality ewes (fertile reproductive age female sheep [or goats]). These ewes were generally purchased by local officials from richer nomads in the same area with project funds. In each of the subsequent four years, 4 new families, two in each community, were loaned 50 ewes each. During the trial period, therefore, a total of 1,000 sheep were provided by the project to 20 households.

Maternal & child health fr p 1

promotion. By the time someone is ill there is little or no facility for treatment."

GTT's work directly benefits 5,500 people—mainly women and teenagers, although there is a men's group—by monthly updates of pregnant women and women with children under two years of age. GTT provides a full-time health promoter to train health staff and local volunteers, and to facilitate group discussion and guide and motivate behaviour change. Mothers and neonates receive group training in pregnancy and post-natal care, mentoring, clean delivery kits and post-natal checks. The health promoter works with local general practitioners, government and non-governmental organisations to improve health services locally and nationally.

GTT and the new women's NGO formed from the groups held a mass event this year, a Teej (mother-in-law festival), which focused on neonatal care and gender



Sorting sheep to be loaned for the Revolving Sheep Bank

Copyright M.C. Goldstein and C.M. Beall

were repaid on time and new households allocated loans with the repaid sheep. As a result, during the course of the trial, 20 households received loans of 1,000 sheep. Since the end

Each of the recipient households signed formal contracts requiring them to repay 1/2 of their loan in fertile female sheep at the end of year 04 (without interest), and half in year 05. Each recipient also has a formal guarantor. Consequently, from year 05 onwards, the community Sheep Bank will be receiving 100 ewes per year in repayments and will continue to loan two households each year with 50 ewes. So long as each household repays its loan, this will continue indefinitely.

The nomads were extremely grateful for the assistance. Virtually all came to thank us and say how this has changed their life. It was very moving.

The households were selected by the elected officials in each of the communities in consultation with xiang officials. We specified that they should oversee the allocation and ensure that the recipient households were using the loan properly, i.e., were not killing the animals for meat or selling them for other goods. In several early cases, the nomad community took back the sheep because a household was not using them correctly and gave them to other families.

The program has been enormously successful and in both communities 100% of the sheep

of the trial program, i.e., when the repayments started, 20 new households (4 per year) have received 50 ewes each (total = 1,000 sheep or in a few cases goats). In other words the Revolving Sheep Bank has been successfully created and is operating successfully on its own run by the local communities, hopefully for decades to come. At the time of the sheep bank loan, 100% were below the poverty line (30/person). After it (in 2009), 25% were below but 75% had risen above the poverty line.

Those who have not yet received the Sheep Bank loan also all said that this is the best program they have had and the most effective for them. The local and county leaders also said the same thing. They said that this provides assistance in a way that really allows nomad households to improve their economic status (and self-esteem).

The project has now spread to many other communities in these two rural townships (xiang), and the xiang officials said that officials from xiang in Ali Prefecture have come to learn how to operate the sheep bank program in their area. Also we are told that the government itself has started to incorporate some of these techniques, for example making written contracts with recipients of the aid it provides.

Please see website for full report with table.



Men's group. Green Tara Trust

disparity around income generation. "This is the first time these women have ever come out for a festival on their own and disobeyed their husbands," Dr Stephens writes.

"We work with people from the whole community as everyone contributes to creating a health culture. For example, husbands have a strong influence on whether a woman has an assisted delivery here. Anyone over 13 years of age can participate in programme planning, implementation and mentoring. We actively seek out minority and disadvantaged groups and ensure they are able to be involved and voice their issues. Given the current political situation in Nepal we make a particular point of regularly meeting with all political groups in the programme areas, including Maoist rebels, to ensure there is a common understanding and engagement in the work. There are currently no problems." See website for more.

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