

BODHI Australia members: see last page for AGM notice & agenda



BODHI TIMES

Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight

Founding Patron: His Holiness XIV Dalai Lama

Founded 1989

**December, 2011
No 41**

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 with traditional religious or secular organisations. We ask only for a kind heart.

What do we do?

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



Clockwise from left. Mro students at Moanoghar Orphanage in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh, in traditional dress. The Mro are one of the indigenous groups in the CHT displaced by the Kaptai Dam; 15-year-old Baba Ali, addicted to glue sniffing like most of his friends. He lives under the railway bridge behind him in Assam, India (*photo courtesy Philip Dean Lotus Flower Trust, UK*); Dr Ko Tar from Burma, in Bodh Gaya, India; teacher receiving training certificate from Sr Cyril, Loreto Day School, Kolkata, India

Snapshots



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Current Projects



Health clinic
Ulan Bator, Mongolia
Medical salary, supplies & health worker training



Traditional healers
Kathmandu Valley, Nepal
Training in maternal/child care & refresher courses



SNEHA School
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Education & health for refugee & remote children

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Seven Billion Day

In late October I attended a two-day workshop called "Global Population and the Planetary Future – 2100" in Seattle, Washington, USA. This was organised by Foundation for the Future, brainchild of inventor and philanthropist Walter Kistler. Ten participants from the USA, Australia, Russia, India, UK and South Africa convened, including Dr Norman Myers, a British environmentalist best known for his concept of biodiversity hotspots, Cornell University ecologist Prof David Pimentel and Jerry Glen, a leading futurist. Also present were Dr Joseph Chamie, former director of the United Nations Population Division and Dr Mehtab Karim, a prominent analyst of Muslim demographic futures. We were each asked to describe critical issues pivotal to humanity's long-term future. A summary of mine follows.

The Parachute Principle

In 1989, I heard Paul Ehrlich compare the reactions of an ecologist and an economist falling from a building. The ecologist panics, but the economist is confident that demand will create a parachute. Hope is not yet lost,

all of Earth. Our species evolved from the ecology; we must now rediscover our ecological souls. To do this we need leadership, inspiration, appropriate price signals and luck. It's a tough call.

“ The Green Revolution (more food per unit of land) has won a temporary success in man's war against hunger and deprivation; it has given humans a breathing space. If fully implemented, the revolution can provide sufficient food for sustenance during the next three decades. But the frightening power of human reproduction must also be curbed, otherwise the successes of The Green Revolution will be ephemeral only.”

Norman Borlaug, 1970

It is only about five decades since a large number of humans began to understand that there are planetary Limits to Growth (diminishing resources such as good soil, oil and phosphate that will eventually limit the size of the human population). In 1970 Norman Borlaug, in his Nobel Prize for Peace speech, warned that humanity would soon face a great struggle to feed itself (see box).

Within 15 years most world leaders forgot Borlaug's warning. Public policies instead promulgated the idea that Limits to Growth

promote personal and family security at a time when public goods are in obvious decline and when the once-plausible task of promoting health and well-being for all appears to be fading, even as an aspiration. Current solutions buy short-term relief but intensify middle- and long-term risk.

On the positive side, emerging technologies and old-fashioned human courage suggest ways that could reduce these problems. The Arab Spring has seen an encouraging reaction against repressive autocracies. The Occupy movements illustrate an overdue response to the stranglehold of big money and big corporations. What is really needed is a *Global Spring*, an overthrowing of old-world thinking which 1) keeps the world wedded to a toxic cocktail of profligate fossil-fuel use and 2) promotes the *hedonic treadmill* (the fruitless pursuit of material and status goods as the way to happiness). Key elements of this re-awakening will be *contraction and convergence* (less ecological waste by the rich and more consumption of materials and information by the poor), particularly through global education and rights-based family planning.

Academic Wars: population & sustainability

A July, 2011 issue of *Science*, the world's second-ranked scientific journal, featured population, including a long essay concerning the district of Machakos, in Kenya, identified by Ester Boserup (a leading 20th century development academic) and others as



L: Erastus Salisbury Field (1805-1900), The Garden of Eden; rt: homes along the railway in Guwahati, Assam, India. Photo courtesy Phillip Dean Lotus Flower Trust

A dream



A reality



ingenuity inspires. Theoretical ecological and social solutions to our dilemma exist, such as clean energy, mass urban farming and desalination. But to open the parachute, we need to recognise the closeness of the ground. Too many modern economists still deny the nearing crisis. Technology is insufficient; we also need an unprecedented scale of human co-operation. Anxiety is justified, given our collective peril. The threat is from ourselves, *Homo sapiens*, especially our ancient, evolutionarily-programmed propensity to think small and primarily to identify with limited groups, such as those that are tribal or based on faith or language.

Such strategies sustained our ancestors for several million years, until humans displaced numerous other predators and occupied almost

were passé, ushering in three decades of the *Cornucopian Enchantment*, a period when most political, spiritual, corporate and scientific leaders denied the severity of our coalescing problems. It is thus unsurprising that denial, driven by confusion and suppression, still permeates societies globally. We have increasing collective understanding of global climate change (including extremely severe flooding most recently in Thailand and Cambodia), declining biodiversity, worsening droughts (the famine in Somalia has now been linked with climate change), ocean acidification, rising energy and food prices, falling groundwater, economic madness and large-scale political blindness. Rising inequality and corruption are quasi-rational responses by officials and elites, justified by practitioners and perpetrators to

demonstrating how more people in a given area can improve human well-being. The essay, like many in this special issue and many others generally, represents the debate concerning Limits to Growth and human population numbers as ongoing. Yet, the author says, in passing: "Greater economic stability also led families to have fewer children and invest more in education". If there truly were no Limits to Growth, then why would lower fertility be listed as a benefit? While it is true that a scientific debate still exists concerning these issues (largely a hangover of the *Cornucopian Enchantment*), it is time for the debate to end and effective action to begin. Limits to Growth are real, close and perilous.

For further information, please see www.futurefoundation.org/programs/hum_wrk8.htm

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The latest

Program Coordinator South Asia

Q: How can we be of more benefit to our local partners and the communities they serve? A: Hire a professional social worker for a year and see what happens. So we did, on 15th August 2011: Mr Krish Chakma, from Arunachal Pradesh, who has worked with Actionaid India, sSTEP Northeast and the UK's Lotus Flower Trust. He is meeting with our existing and potential local partners in India and Bangladesh, assessing our projects and helping us ensure that your donations are used as beneficially as possible. For regular updates, please see www.bodhi.net.au/html/krishnewsfrsthasia.html.

Skills sharing

BODHI is impressed by the efforts of local NGO sSTEP Northeast (www.sstep.org.in) in Guwahati, Assam, India, to improve the health and education of children living along railway lines and under bridges (see photos pp 1&2).

We are happy that the Lotus Flower Trust (LFT) is raising funds to build a home/school/skills centre for 200 children, miles away from the railway. For information about that and the other wonderful work that LFT does, please see www.lotusflowertrust.org/



We are enlarging our sphere of influence, working with like-minded organisations and people we might not otherwise reach. Krish spoke to Assamese villagers in Morigaon (above) about income generation and met with Dr Dhires Chowdhury of Banchbo (www.banchbo.org.in) while he was in Kolkata for the second teacher training session at Loreto Day School (see below).

Project Updates

Teacher training, Kolkata, India. The second teacher training course has taken place at Loreto Day School in Kolkata for 23 teachers from Youth Buddhist Society (YBS)-associated schools in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Thanks again to Sr Cyril and her staff.

Motorcycle for Moanoghar Mobile Medical Clinics, CHT, Bangladesh. We are funding regular mobile medical clinics and health education in isolated areas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and will now purchase a motorcycle so that Labani Chakma (pictured right), the nurse/educator we hired, can do her job in remote destinations.



We fundraised on Facebook and Twitter, our first time ever on the social media. We were curious to see what would happen, and it was this: two people responded from completely outside our usual orbit, a cleric in Bangladesh and the UK's Eric Avebury, a member of the House of Lords who led a human rights fact-finding mission to Moanoghar recently. He and others are forming UK Friends of Moanoghar; initially they hope to donate to BODHI's Moanoghar projects.

JEEVAK teachers' and assistants' salaries, Pune, India. In addition to expanding support for 0-5 year-old tribal child health and education, BODHI has agreed to fund salaries for two nursery school teachers and two assistants so the schools can remain open.

SNEHA school, Diyun, Arunachal Pradesh (AP), India

* BODHI is funding a series of health awareness programmes on topics such as hand washing, dental health care and malaria in surrounding villages from November 2011 to February 2012, when the weather is good in AP. The dental care objective is to motivate and inculcate in people the importance of brushing their teeth with toothpaste. The majority of people do not brush their teeth, especially the older and illiterate ones. Part of BODHI's contribution is 500 toothbrushes.

* Susanta Chakma's tireless fundraising efforts with larger organisations are bearing fruit: thanks to the Shamdasani Foundation, the SNEHA school can now build more permanent structures.

* SNEHA has sent a video of school life at Diyun. Selected photos may be viewed on our website at www.bodhi.net.au/html/sneha.html. We'll be putting the video up on the website as well.

Mobile medical clinics, Mizoram, India. Mr Kulottam Chakma has kindly donated \$1,000 to the women's group, Chakma Mahila Samity, to continue this program in isolated villages.

Traditional healer training and refresher courses, Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. Vital maternal-and-child-health information for this all-male resource

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Thank you

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Dr RJ & Dr VC von Witt, Tasmania
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and

*Prof Niels Becker, for allowing us to hold our 2011 annual general meeting at the National Centre for Epidemiology & Population Health at the Australian National University

* Ric and Jo Easton of Bio-Distributors, Sheffield, Tasmania, Australia for loyal, much-valued support

Welcome Facebook friends, Tweepers & LinkedIn-ers

We need your help

Your loyal and generous support allows us to continue helping the voiceless, the dispossessed and the forgotten. Thank you.

Australian cheques are tax-deductible if made out to BODHI Australia Overseas Relief Fund. All U.S. checks are tax-deductible.

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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Family giving

Chris Gribble writes

Nearly four years ago a small business grew out of a friendship. Fortress Learning (www.fortresslearning.com.au) is the outcome of a more than 10-year relationship between the Wests and the Gribbles. In this business we have tried to instill many of the values that are common to our families. This has included sharing how we spend our money. From the outset we have sought to ensure that we are aware of the needs of the world in which we live.

Dr Bryan West is a long-term supporter of the Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight (BODHI) and its work to ensure that the maximum benefit goes to those who can use a helping hand, not a hand-out. Bryan introduced the idea to me that we should support BODHI together. This is something that our families have embraced together in a family trust.

One of the great benefits to our family of these shared values was the recent opportunity for my wife, April, and I to take our four children to China for six months while I taught at a university in Xian. Having our own business gave us the freedom to be able to do this. This allowed our children Tobin (11), Yasmin (9), Sophia (8) and Tabitha (5) to see beyond their own comfortable lives in Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia.

One of the most telling moments was with Lucy, a small girl the children befriended, who with

her mother was HIV positive. When going on an outing to a nearby park they experienced the reaction of a community that lived in fear of the disease and reacted from that fear. My children were warned as they walked with this girl to stay away from her because they too could catch the disease.



Chris Gribble, his wife April and their four children, Tobin, Yasmin, Tabitha and Sophia, in China

My wife also was challenged when seeing the living conditions of the mother and daughter. They lived with no heating, no running water and limited electricity. They spent a good part of their time locked in their apartment by a man who controlled their lives. Food was often in short supply. Knowing that an 8-year-old girl would have to beg for people to throw food through the window is heart-wrenching for a mum.

My hope is that these and other similar experiences will be forever etched in my family's memory. I pray that we will always be aware of the fortunate lives that we live. And, that we never lose sight of the great privilege that we have to live in Australia.

I feel that our family is very privileged to be able to share in BODHI's story. It is good to know that with the BODHI community we share many of the same values that brought Bryan and me together.



Lucy and Tabitha in Xian, China

The Gribble-West Family Trust contributes generously to BODHI, both through direct banking donations and project support. Thanks to two consecutive annual donations of US\$10,000, we've begun reproductive and HIV/AIDS education and counselling for underprivileged young people aged 16-24 in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand.

As well as an educator, Chris Gribble is a pastor in the Churches of Christ and the Baptist Church and is studying for a Doctorate in Philosophy. For more see www.fortresslearning.com.au/about-us/our-people/about-chris/

Thank you to the Gribbles and the Wests from all of us.

BODHI news

Projects. We're developing new projects, which we'll tell you about as they mature.

Evaluation and consolidation. This has been a reflective time. We are reviewing projects and withdrawing from those that have reached the end of their BODHI life cycle, clearing the path for new local partners and projects and a deepening of existing ones.

Social media. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and our website have brought us a new world of friends, tweeters and browsers; they help us to address a problem facing many NGOs: how to attract young followers and, more broadly, may ensure the long-term future of BODHI. And so we tend our social media flock, with fluctuating degrees of time commitment but always with good intentions.

One of the people we've met on the social media is Ng Yeow Foo of Singapore (pictured below with Colin at Changi Airport). He works as a pharmacist, volunteers in the Buddhist Library and supports Community Child Rescue Centre, a local charitable organisation, in Lalitpur and the Ideal Peace English School, a private school, in Patan. Both are in Nepal, and he visits them when he can.

Videos. We are working in India and the West on videos for YouTube about different aspects of BODHI: our projects, our people and topical updates.

INEB conference. Mr Krish Chakma, Program Coordinator BODHI South Asia, attended the annual meeting of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), this year held in Bodh Gaya, India in late October. BODHI also sent Mr Susanta Chakma and three others. INEB was established in 1989 by Mr Sulak Sivaraksa and other thinkers and social activists, Buddhist and non-Buddhist. INEB brings together people from all over the world committed to social justice with ecological vision based on engaged spirituality. At the 1995 INEB conference near Bangkok, Thailand, Colin and Susan first met BODHI advisers Prof Chris Queen, Sr Mila de Gimeno, Sulak Sivaraksa and the late Robert Aitken Roshi.



Above: children in a Tripura village in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), which has one of the country's lowest childhood education rates. Of CHT householders surveyed recently, 55.2% have no formal schooling. Fewer than 8% of children complete primary education and fewer than 2% complete secondary education [contact BODHI for reference]. What edge will they have in tomorrow's resource-poor world, especially with the current encroachment of multinational tobacco farming? *Photo courtesy Moanoghar*

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Dear Member,

Please consider attending our annual general meeting, to be held in Canberra on Sunday, 17th June 2012 at 2pm. Location to be announced. The following business will be conducted: presentation of reports, election of committee members and officers for presidents, vice-president, treasurer and secretary; confirmation of minutes from last 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@sctelco.net.au. For location please ring (02) 6247 1227 or email Colin at colin.butler@anu.edu.au or Susan at csbutler@sctelco.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