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Dear *|FNAME|*

It's been a torrid six months for most of us (we thought the smoke and fires were bad enough - and they were!). Even in Australia there has been fear and anxiety, inconvenience, social isolation and crippling unemployment due to the pandemic. But in India the suffering has been much worse. In an intense period of "lockdown" many day labourers lost their income and therefore their capacity to feed themselves and their families. Others were forced to walk hundreds of kilometres to their home village (see image immediately below and many more on our website [here](#)). The lockdown has since been lifted but it did little if anything to reduce India's COVID burden; daily growing, already over 30,000 deaths from over 300,000 confirmed cases (likely a [gross under-estimate](#) due to the very low rate of testing). Here, we briefly focus on the response to the lockdown part of the COVID crisis by our two partners, each of whom are in the sprawling central Indian state of Maharashtra.



The Bahujan Hitay Women and Child Welfare Society

[Karunadeepa](#), of the Bahujan Hitay Women and Child Welfare Society, Pune, sent us photos that provide a glimpse of the hardship endured by people living in an "informal settlement" which we think is adjacent to her office. (This second group of photos, two of which are immediately below, were probably taken by one of Karunadeepa's team.)





Karunadeepa also sent some images of the work she and her team have been doing to alleviate some of the hunger and hardship in Pune (see below).



More images on our website, click [here](#).

COVID-19 emergency relief provided by the Aryaloka Education Society, Nagpur, India

In April, 2020 BODHI Australia sent 400,000 Indian Rupees (about A\$8,500) for emergency relief in informal settlements in Nagpur, to feed families experiencing great hardship, because of the Indian government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As mentioned above (but repeated here for emphasis) day labourers have no savings, but rely on daily work to buy daily food and other essentials. These funds paid for 640 supply kits, each of which included 4 kgs rice, 4 kgs wheat, 1/2 kg dal (lentils), 1/2 kg oil, 50gm turmeric and 100gm Mirchi powder. In total this fed about 3,200 people for eight to ten days. These supplies were distributed by a team of 15 people, both Aryaloka Education Society (AES) staff and volunteers. Food was provided to people previously surveyed, and judged as in the greatest need. No discrimination by gender, religion, or caste was followed. The three pictures below were sent to us by AES; these and a few more are also on our website [here](#).





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The Tara Report: BODHI's focus on gender equity for women and girls

This committee has been formed to focus specifically on projects aimed to improve the lives of women and girls. We are currently investigating a collaborative project with [Green Tara Trust](#) in Nepal to give marginalized women skills in psychosocial support and counselling. There is a high burden of mental ill-health that goes unrecognized in Nepal, and the concept of working psychologically is fairly new in the country. We plan to work with our local and international partners who have experience in this area to design and deliver a programme that is tailored to local need and culturally appropriate.

Members are Emilia Della Torre (sub-committee chair), Dr Jane Stephens, Dr Gilles Rohan and Maxine Ross. Their short biographies follow:

Emilia is an international human rights lawyer. She has worked to promote and protect human rights at the UN, the African Commission of Human Rights and other world courts. A passionate advocate of the rights of women and girls.

Jane is a general (medical) practitioner and the Founder of [Green Tara Trust](#), an NGO working in

health and human rights in Nepal. She has worked in international development for over 25 years, in areas including prevention of sex worker trafficking, health promotion, maternal and mental health. She has expertise in gender mainstreaming and LGBT+ rights.

Gilles has been a medical practitioner, mainly working in the fields of occupational medicine and general/family medicine, including mental health. He has a long-standing interest in human rights and is concerned about the health/mental health and educational inequities and inequalities affecting women and girls, and LGBTIQ+ people.

Maxine has worked as a nurse with Tibetan refugees in India part of which was setting up and working in a TB clinic in Sera Monastery south India. She now works with Aboriginal Families as a Community midwife and Child and Family nurse in Armidale, NSW which has a strong advocacy role for women that can include everything from pregnancy to homelessness.

If you have specific interest in this area please contact BODHI gender subcommittee members at bodhiaus@gmail.com. The gender page on our website is [here](#).

The three images below were also included in a recent batch of photos sent to us by Karunadeepa. We don't know the name of the young woman yet (in the bottom picture), or anything substantive about her, other than that we think that this photo was taken in Pune, but we hope to. We might be projecting, but we believe that this young woman deserves as much opportunity in her life as any other person, and we fear her opportunities will be limited. We think that the first two photos were taken by professional photographers, again they provide insight into the hardship of the poor in India, worsened by the recent COVID-19 lockdown.







Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting was held on May 31, 2020, by Zoom, for the first time ever. We think many readers will be getting used to using Zoom (or similar software too). For many years our AGMs have had at least one person attending remotely, but that person is always disadvantaged. When we all attend remotely, it seems more democratic, saves a lot of trouble, cost, and carbon emissions. We think we will repeat the experience. The reports and minutes are posted on the website [here](#).

Thanking our donors; expanding our work.

We are deeply appreciative for our donors, partners, advertisers ([Fortress Learning](#) and [Biodistributors](#)) and other supporters, past and present. In the last month or so we have had some first time donors, motivated in part by the suffering in India. Thanks especially to the [Ambedkar International Mission](#) Australia (AIM) for your support.

If you are reading this but have never made a donation, you may think that \$20 is not a lot .. but we assure you that it is. (It is also personally encouraging for us). If you are already a donor (THANK YOU!), please consider forwarding this newsletter to someone you know.

At its peak (1960s) the Australian government spent almost 60 cents in every \$100 of gross domestic product on foreign aid; this is now only about 20 cents. Some countries, including Britain, give approximately 5 times as much as a proportion. Private donations can help fill this gap.

How to support our work

To help us continue (and expand) our work, please consider making a donation which you can do safely by clicking [here](#). We can no longer accept credit card donations, but bank transfers, Paypal and cheques are fine. (Bank transfers are best, but please let us know about them so we can issue a receipt). Donations are tax deductible if you pay income tax in Australia. There is a fairly complete list of the names of our supporters (past and present) [here](#). If you don't want your name listed please let us know by emailing bodhiaus@gmail.com.

What is BODHI?

Since 1989 BODHI (Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health and Insight) has supported more than 50 development projects mainly in India, Bangladesh, Thailand and the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. BODHI is (we think) the world's fourth oldest Buddhist influenced development (aid) organisation based in a high-income country. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, winner of the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize (photographed below with Australian Indigenous elders at Uluru), has been our patron since that year. More on our history is [here](#).





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