



Dear

The last year has been very difficult; not only from the devastating effects of the pandemic (the cause of which is still [unknown](#)), not only from the brutal invasion of Ukraine, not only from the far less reported civil wars in [Tigray \(Ethiopia\)](#), [Yemen](#) and elsewhere; and not only from the steep rises in the cost of food (a record [high](#) in April 2022) and fuel. In addition, there is climate change. In our view, all of these phenomena are related to the warning given by the late Donella Meadows and her colleagues, issued in 1972 - that there are [Limits to Growth](#).

Trailoky Baudha Mahasangha Sahayak Gana (TBMSG); Bahujan Hitay Pune Project (BHPP) and removal of Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) Status

Another blow for BODHI Australia in the last few months is our inability to legally provide funding for projects undertaken by the Bahujan Hitay Pune Project (BHPP) due to a change in its parent NGO's Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) status.

All of India's charities must hold valid and current FCRA registration or receive specific approval from India's Ministry of Home Affairs to legally receive funds from donors outside of India.

In 2020 the Indian Government proposed a series of amendments to the FCRA Bill. The BHPP, managed by Karunadeepa Wankade is a subsidiary of TBMSG. Regrettably, in late 2021, the FCRA status of TBMSG was revoked. This makes it impossible for BODHI Australia to provide funds to BHPP for projects such as its balwadis (kindergardens), creche, health service and slum outreach.

This change in FCRA status not only affects the ability of BHPP to provide programs and projects that were in the past reliant on foreign funding such as those provided by BODHI Australia, but also has adverse implications for people employed by BHPP, who previously have delivered those programs. Even more importantly the loss of FCRA affects those who have benefitted from participation in such projects.

There is some hope that in the future TBMSG will once again regain its FCRA status; but this is unlikely to happen anytime soon.

BODHI Australia valued its partnership with BHPP and the work that was collectively achieved with Karunadeepa and her team over many years. It was a partnership forged on mutual respect, honesty and trust. With the support of BODHI Australia, BHPP was able to provide much needed childcare for children living in the slums of Pune, enabling their mothers to work and earn a living. BODHI Australia also funded a part time, visiting doctor to provide accessible health, maternal, and neonatal care for those who could least afford it. It also funded outreach in the slums including livelihood training such as hairdressing and beauty care.

BODHI Australia, and the people who work in BODHI-funded services at the BHPP are all devastated by the removal of their FCRA status. The BHPP is currently winding down its services and with that all of BODHI funded projects, programs and services will also cease.

There is sadly little BODHI Australia can do for the BHPP and the community it serves given this legal FCRA imperative. BODHI Australia will however once again consider supporting the BHPP once its FCRA status has been reinstated. We continue to keep a watchful eye.

BODHI Australia takes this opportunity to thank all the staff at the BHPP, and especially to Karunadeepa Wankade, for her leadership in managing and delivering services to the most disadvantaged and especially for the women and children living in the slums of Pune, aimed at improving opportunity and quality of life.

In the interim BODHI Australia has received new project proposals for consideration from two other non-Government organisations (NGOs); each of which has FCRA status. These proposals focus on the empowerment of Dalit and other disadvantaged women. BODHI Australia will keep its members informed of progress.

A bit more about Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) in India

TBMSG is far from the only Indian NGO thus affected. This [report](#) states that there are almost 6,000 other recently stricken charities. A few are famous, such as Oxfam India. Even the [Sisters of Charity](#), founded by Mother Teresa, lost its FCRA status - though it was quickly restored. The reasons for the removal of FCRA status for so many groups are unclear, but appear related to ever-tightening rules. Some charities with FCRA status, allegedly, have used their status to promote religious conversion - a practice that BODHI has never endorsed.

There has been speculation that the increasingly clear [pro-Hindu bias](#) of Prime Minister Modi's government has been a factor, but we are unaware of any data showing that non-Hindu NGOs have suffered additional discrimination.

Indeed, one of the affected NGOs is the Ramakrishna Mission. That is interesting as President Modi has long-standing [links](#) with Ramakrishna (a sage - 1836 - 1886) who was known for his religious [tolerance](#).

Aryaloka Computer Education (a program of the Aryaloka Education Society)

The disruption to the regular work of BODHI's other current partner, the Aryaloka Computer Education (which teaches computer and life skills to young adults) of 2020, caused by the pandemic and the need for social distancing continued through most of 2021. Through this time the staff of Aryaloka Computer Education were supported by the Karuna Trust, in the UK. (As the income of the staff would otherwise have fallen, without students to teach).

Following a discussion with Aryaketu in June 2021 (and a formal proposal - [see](#)) BODHI Australia provided almost A\$11,000 from our general account (for which donations are tax deductible) to provide ten desktop computers for use as part of the Aryaloka Computer Education Program. The upgrade in computers will allow the Aryaloka Computer Education Program to continue to train young people, who are socially, economically and occupationally disadvantaged in IT skills in order to improve their education, training and employment opportunities and outcomes.

Supporting young women achieve academic and career success

BODHI Australia is committed to the empowerment of women and girls; a priority is to identify and fund initiatives that help address gender

discrimination and disadvantage in order to improve their socio-economic status and well-being.

In 2021, in partnership with Aryaloka Computer Education program, BODHI Australia supported a funding request for the purchase, and long term loan, of three lap top computers for three disadvantaged and aspiring young women. Laptop computers purchased were selected based on each of the young women's academic needs, with one student requiring a more sophisticated and slightly more expensive computer. The young women had previously been undertaking their learning and homework using their mobile phones; phones with limited IT applications or capacity to successfully manage their learning output (see photos below).

Miss Akiko Subhash Gajbhiye (aspiring engineer), Miss Fareen Naz (studying commerce) and Miss Oshin Rajendra Dongre (studying engineering) received their laptop computers at an official ceremony hosted by Aryaketu of Aryaloka Computer Education. In attendance were the three young women, their parents or guardians and staff of the Aryaloka Computer Education program.

In a What's App message to BODHI Australia Aryaketu stated "that the girls were very excited and happy to receive their new laptops" indicating that the young women had expressed it was "an unbelievable gift they had received". Aryaketu also went on to say that the parents who attended the handover ceremony "were in tears", expressing their "joy and happiness", and thanking BODHI Australia for its generosity. These computers were not something the families of these young women could afford to purchase for their daughters.

See images below (names and photos published with permission).



The three recipients (Miss Akiko Subhash Gajbhiye, Miss Fareen Naz and Miss Oshin Rajendra Dongre), two mothers and one father, published with permission. Photo: Aryaketu



One recipient, with her parents, Aryaketu and a trustee, Dhammachari Aryakirti, published with permission. Photographer: Mr Rajendra Dongre.

Aryaloka Education Society COVID-19 Emergency Food Relief

During the period of disruption Aryaloka Education Society staff acted creatively to provide other forms of relief. For example, Aryaketu liased with some Buddhist doctors in Nagpur; with their help he took some training as an ambulance attendant, hired a vehicle, converted it into an ambulance, installed oxygen cylinders, found a driver, and for a month provided ambulance services to some of the sickest and poorest people in Nagpur.

He reported that the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in India was devastating. In April 2022 the New York Times [reported](#) that the World Health Organization is about to release an revised estimate of the global death toll of the pandemic (direct and indirect). The revised figure is of 15 million, up 9 million from the current official estimate of about 6 million. Many of these additional deaths are in India, perhaps 4 million, instead of 520,000, a ratio of almost eight to one.

Those who experienced the full brunt of the pandemic's consequences in India were those most disadvantaged. India was in lock down, people lost their jobs, lost their income, were unable to access food, and many of their loved ones died of COVID-19. The Indian Government provided ration cards or food parcels for people in need but those food parcels were in some instances unable to reach the masses; adequate nutrition for many was worsened by the lockdown (food rations provided by the Indian Government were mainly for a mixture of wheat and rice). In addition, many slum-dwellers did not know how to access the ration cards.

In partnership with Aryaloka Education Society and under Aryaketu's leadership, BODHI Australia provided just over A\$5,000 from the BODHI Australia 'welfare account" to assist with this food relief for people living in some of the Nagpur slums (the BODHI Australia welfare account holds funds provided by BODHI advertisers, anonymous donors and the occasional donor who does not request a tax deductible receipt).

In total, BODHI provided food parcels for some 350 families. Each food parcel containing staples such as chickpeas (channa), lentils (dal), soybeans, sugar, tea, cooking oil, spices (tumeric and mirchi powder) and soap. They also included sanitary products for women and girls.

Aryaketu, his staff and team of helpers (who were available while their normal work was disrupted) distributed the food parcels and helped people who were homeless apply for the Indian Government's ration card (see photo).



Text by Aryaketu (edited). Name: Mrs Shantabai Bagade Age: 80 years. She is staying with her son who is driving a rikshaw but not working well. She is living

in a very poor quality house and in rainy season it's a risk can collapse anytime. Both were Corona positive and were critical; they thought it was better to die because they do not have enough financial support to survive. She was very happy to receive the ration kit from Aryaloka Education Society so they can survive for one month. Later again there will be problem. Sometimes sleep with hungry. She has blood pressure, and needs daily medication. Photographer: Aryaketu

BODHI Australia Committee changes

At the 2021 Annual General Meeting Lucia Arman exchanged places with former president, Dr Devin Bowles. Maxine Ross is now a committee member; Colin Butler is now secretary as well as treasurer (and newsletter editor). [Prof Elise de Vido](#) was elected to the committee; we welcome Elise and also thank her predecessor, Emilia della Torre. In time, Elise will post an article on the website. Elise (based in Taiwan) is also the president of [BODHI](#), our sister NGO, based in the US.

BODHI Australia Annual General Meeting 22 May 2022

The BODHI Annual General Meeting for 2022 will be held by Zoom, starting 11.00 am, Sunday May 22 (Eastern Australian Time). The agenda is below. **All interested BODHI Donors and Members are welcome to attend via Zoom** ([email](#) us for an invitation).

AGENDA

1. Apologies

2. Ordinary business:

2.1 to confirm the [minutes](#) of the last preceding annual general meeting and of any general meeting held since that meeting;

2.2 to receive from the committee, auditor and servants of the Organisation reports on the operations and transactions of the Organisation during the last preceding financial year of the Organisation; (i.e. reports from the President, Treasurer, and Communications for calendar year 2021);

2.3 to elect the officers of the Organisation and the ordinary committee members;

2.4 to appoint the auditor and determine his or her remuneration;

2.5 to appoint a Public Officer;

2.6 to determine the remuneration of servants of the Organisation.

3. Business Arising (if any)

4. Special Business:

5. Date and place of 2023 A.G.M.

All members are welcome to attend. Please email bodhiaus@gmail.com for an invitation to the Zoom meeting.

Colin Butler, secretary BODHI Australia

* Reports should be available [here](#) by May 21, 2021

Our **Annual General Meeting** for 2021 was held by Zoom on May 30, 2021. The minutes are [here](#); reports (related to the 2020 calendar year) are available [here](#).

Thanking our donors; continuing our work.

We are deeply appreciative for our donors, partners, advertisers ([Biodistributors](#), previously (as well) Fortress Learning) and other supporters, past and present.

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 five 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.

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. More on our history is [here](#).

