

BODHI TIMES

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Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight (BODHI)

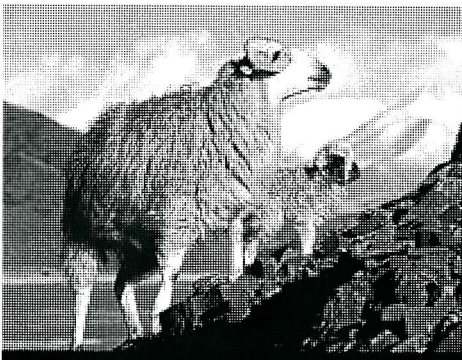
Revolving Sheep Bank Underway

Prof Goldstein shakes hands with headman while Yonden looks on.

Photo: Beall



The Revolving Sheep Bank began when Professor Melvyn C Goldstein and Dr Cynthia Beall went to Tibet in July. Prof Goldstein writes: "Basically, everything went forward without a hitch. We picked up Yonden [retired nomad school principal who is overseeing the project] and made it to the nomad first area in two days (from Lhasa). The heads of both nomad areas [were] in town and both agreed to the pilot plan. Cynthia and I gave each of the two nomad groups 100 sheep/goats for a total of four families (200 sheep/goats). We paid 150 yuan (USD18.50/AD36) per animal."



Mother & newborn lamb. Photo: Goldstein/Beall

Although the price may seem high, one of the project's goals is to inject funds into an economically depressed area. Goldstein replies to the question of selling sheep might provide competition to wealthier nomads: "The richer nomads all have to sell animals normally and we paid a good price so they did well."

Sheep, Goats & School Materials

In this region, which comprises hundreds of square miles with excess grassland, "wealthier nomad households have limits on the number of animals they can have, based on their herd size in 1996." But poor households are able to substantially increase their herd size, before reaching the maximum allowed limit. "Social welfare and poverty alleviation are strong social motives there."

Goldstein signed an agreement with the xiang government to oversee the program. "They in turn are signing an agreement with the local nomad group, who will sign an

agreement with a rich family who will act as a guarantor and it will sign an agreement with the recipient family." Although cumbersome, Goldstein notes that "this is how the local officials wanted to do it. The actual transfer was to have taken place on August 20 and 21st, and Yonden was to rent a car/truck and witness the transfer. We hired him for the coming year to witness the transfer and then next [northern] summer to return to the nomad areas and see how many animals survived etc. His salary is USD250 for the year plus transportation money."

The plan for Year 2 of the five-year project is to give 200 sheep/goats to four more families.

Also, Goldstein and Beall gave learning materials to the two xiang (administrative district) schools on BODHI's behalf. Each boarding school has 40-50 students and two or three teachers.

Interest & Payback

This project has generated a lot of response, including questions about interest and whether the nomads will repay their loans. Interest is normally charged for three reasons: to compensate for inflation, to pay for running costs and to make a profit. In the Revolving Sheep Bank, there is no inflation because the loans are repaid in kind. As xiang officials subsidize running costs, it is in their self-interest for the project to work. BODHI subsidizes other running costs. And yes, we have no desire to make a profit.

The purpose of the loans is not financial gain but to change nomads' livelihoods and inject funds into the local economy. Goldstein and Beall thought in "setting up the revolving fund to do something different, i.e., really to have an impact on peoples' lives by providing them a chance to succeed." He and Beall are choosing

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AIDS, Slaves and Geo-engineering

South African President Thabo Mbeki has offended many researchers and activists by his unorthodox views about the AIDS epidemic. I do not defend Mbeki's assertion that transmission of the virus is not an essential cause for AIDS, but I do support his claim that malnutrition and, especially, extreme poverty are root causes of the African AIDS epidemic. It is misleading to claim that epidemics have a single cause. Each cause itself has a cause or a web of causes. The AIDS epidemic is dependent on many factors, including behaviour, knowledge, education, attitudes, and the availability and affordability of medication and medical advice. In the early days of HIV transmission, ignorance of its mechanisms was not associated with poverty. This is no longer the case.

Underpinning Poverty

Although poverty is neither necessary nor sufficient for an individual to contract HIV infection or AIDS, it probably *is* necessary for an epidemic on the scale currently witnessed in sub-Saharan Africa. The factors that underpin poverty in less developed countries are similarly complex. In addition to epidemic disease, they include chronic national debt, unfair trade, corruption in the North and South, the cost of arms purchases, and the consequences of chronic conflict. Economic models of development are conceptually flawed, undermined by forces in favour of continued inequality and inadequately funded.

Butler, CD, "HIV and AIDS, poverty, and causation," *Lancet*, 2000; **356**:1446-7; *Brit.J.Gen Pract.* 2000, **50**: 844.

Geo-engineering

Geo-engineering is becoming a fashionable suggestion to repair the planet, including reversing global warming. One possible method is to fertilise the Southern Ocean with the trace element iron, to encourage the growth of plankton and enable a drawdown of

atmospheric carbon into the deep ocean. But the practicality of this has not yet been demonstrated and adverse effects are likely. The enormous scale required further erodes reliance on geo-engineering solutions.

Chisholm, SW. *Nature* 2000; **407**: 685-687.

Disposable people

This term refers not to plastic dolls but to individuals like you and me. Kevin Bales, who grew up in the American South, now works at a UK university. Under cover he interviewed enslaved water carriers in the desert West African country Mauritania, bonded farm labourers who inherit their debt in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, charcoal makers in Brazil and prostitutes in Thailand. Bales distinguishes old from new slavery. In old slavery, for example in the US until the Civil War and in Brazil until 1888, slaves were an investment. A high purchase price and economic incentives encouraged owners to maintain slaves as if they were machines.

New slavery seems even worse. Over-population and mechanization have led to a global oversupply of low-skilled labour. Consequently, the price of new slaves is low, and there is little incentive to look after their health. When they wear out they are simply discarded. Bales conservatively estimates a minimum of 27 million slaves worldwide, mostly in the Indian subcontinent.

Bales notes that illiteracy and lack of resources leave people particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Innumerate bonded labourers cannot check the interest calculations used by their owner to keep them perpetual prisoners. Others sign documents they cannot read. Recruiters lure Brazilian charcoal makers with glib promises of free food and travel to remote jungle camps, then subsequently inform them that they cannot leave before

repaying transportation costs. Tragically, a sense of honour helps to entrap some of these workers.

Kevin Bales (1999): *Disposable people. New slavery in the global economy*, Univ. California, Berkeley. See also: Anti-Slavery International:

Protesting globalization

Ade facto coalition has emerged among trade unionists, environmentalists and Western aid and religious groups (mainly Christian) opposed to massive Third World debt. The Jubilee movement calls for debt forgiveness. If managed correctly, this would certainly help the Third World. Many trade unionists call for the re-erection of tariff barriers. Unfortunately, such a policy would hurt Third World exporters. Supporters of free trade use these contradictions as evidence of their opponents' incoherence.

Elastic Globalization

They have a point. The term "globalization" is very elastic. The Jubilee movement, trade unionists and the environmental movement are right to protest. They share a common recognition that the powerless are being exploited, but each champions a different population. Jubilee's principal concern is the world's poorest people. Trade unionists care mainly for blue collar workers in developed countries; environmentalists care for nature. None have proposed a solution that assists all three populations. Such a solution—based on sharing, patience and sacrifice—may exist, but these principles seem insufficiently sexy to market. Who wants to be a martyr in a culture where the advertising industry relentlessly promotes a culture of waste and consumerism?

Nevertheless, this movement has made a mark. The bland reassurance of TINA ("there is no alternative") to globalization no longer carries the same certainty.

www.jubilee2000uk.org/

Tibetans in India Face Mental Health Problems

Tenpa TK writes from India.

"My personal opinion is that mental health is a serious problem in the Tibetan community. For example, Mundgod has roughly 52 people who need some sort of mental health care. It is well understood that we have many people who have survived Chinese torture. They are not too well and need treatment.

"The other affected are mostly young adults, a typical problem in a refugee community where mental balance is disturbed by deprivation and unattainable or over-ambitious goals. They are confronted with inhospitable circumstances and unable to cope with the fast-changing social environment and needs. If the problem is not addressed, there is every chance that it will worsen.

"A sustained effort to implement this program for the long-term is essential to minimize the public's negative attitude towards this health problem, make mental health service acceptable and minimize the community's mental health problems," he concludes.

Medical Director's note: Given the losses and dislocation inevitably experienced by refugees it is not surprising that depression is a major problem for Tibetans in exile (see also *BODHI Times* No. 5). Depression has affected several of the Dalai Lama's close family members, including upon return from fact-finding tours to Tibet in the early 1980s (see Mary Craig's *Kundun*). Depression is often considered shameful, a sign of weakness. In fact, it may be evidence of sensitivity. If it is to be treated, depression must be acknowledged, not stigmatised.

Mail & Miscellany

Benefits for BODHI

BODHI's Environmental Adviser, Senator Bob Brown gave two benefit slide shows for BODHI of his 1999 trip to Tibet on 22 and 23 October in Devonport and Campbell Town, Tasmania. Both shows were well attended.

Thanks to Sen Brown; Malcolm Dick for matters organisational and photographic; Bronwen Dickinson and Ingrid Mitchell for culinary efforts; principal Stephen Plowright, teacher Annette Salter and cook Lee Marlin at the Campbell Town District High School for their hard work.

The E-Post Box

"Yours is one of the best thought out, soundest reasoning, and most humanitarian projects I have heard of. Not only does it make them self-sufficient, but your plan allows the Tibetan people who utilize your Sheep Bank to maintain their dignity and place in their own world, without cause for ill-feelings in return. Bravo!" Janet Wilson, USA

"Has anyone looked into the environmental effects of sheep grazing on the Tibetan plateau? It's my impression that they can have rather serious environmental consequences, though I'm definitely no expert. Why not yaks?" Frank Merewether, USA

Prof Goldstein replies: "This an area where there is an excess of pasture so overgrazing is not a problem. As to why not yak, in this area the vegetation yak prefer is scarce so only about 10% of herds are yak. Sheep/goats are the main economic engine since they do well and provide needed commodities. In Tibetan nomad areas further to the east, the vegetation changes somewhat: the proportion of yak increases."

Credit Card Payments

Currently, credit card payments can only be made in Australian dollars. We are working on getting a facility for US dollars.

Are you a US donor with a VISA Card that expires 09/02? Did you make a \$50 donation to BODHI that still has not been charged to your account? There's a reason. You forgot to put your name and address on the donation slip and we can't decipher your signature. Please contact us.

Thank You

Fiona Allison, Australia
Iku Bacon, USA
John Bell, Australia
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Special thanks to Paul Thomas of Rugs of Tibet in Hobart, Tasmania, for offering to donate part of the profits to BODHI. This ethical business imports Tibetan rugs and other goods from Nepal. Visit the website at www.rugsoftibet.com.

Bulletins

HIV/AIDS. Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) likens the impact of HIV in some societies to its effect on the human body, undermining institutions that are meant to defend society: teachers, doctors, and health services. For example, in the first 10 months of 1998, Zambia lost 1300 teachers to AIDS, the equivalent of about 2/3 of all teachers trained annually.

Australian Tax Deductibility. Drs. Dan Rikleen and Kristen Lobo are writing an independent report about BODHI's work in Mundgod, Karnataka, India. We hope this will clear a major hurdle set by the Australian government on the pathway to Australian tax-deductible status.

Dharma Gaia Trust (DGT). One of DGT's objectives is to generate funds for Buddhist-inspired ecological projects in developing countries. DGT has supported such diverse projects as protection of Siberian tigers and the Women's Sewing and Permaculture Project in Rural Rainforests of Western Ecuador. Contact DGT at <http://forests.org/ric/Projects/DGT/welcome.htm>.

Goals

Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight (BODHI) aims to find sustainable ways to improve health, education and the environment, particularly in developing countries. We achieve this by providing a hook, not a fish; by, for example:

- * Continuing education for remote health workers, lay and professional
- * Ongoing health and environmental competitions such as Healthy Baby and Village Sanitation
- * Matching volunteers and communities
- * Sustainable environmental projects
- * Promoting economic self sufficiency, for instance with the Revolving Sheep Bank in Tibet

BODHI is neither religious nor political. We have supporters and advisers from many faiths. We ask only for a kind heart and practical assistance.

We need your help

Thanks to your generosity, BODHI has been begun exciting and innovative projects. We need your donations to continue.

Please send your donation, payable in US or Australian dollars, to an address below.

US donations tax-deductible

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Welcome, New Adviser

We welcome Professor David Rapport to BODHI's Advisory Board.

David J Rapport is a Professor in the College Faculty of Environmental Design and Rural Planning, University of Guelph, Canada, and an Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. He is a co-founder and former President of the International Society for Ecosystem Health (ISEH). Prof Rapport pioneered the development of approaches to the assessment of ecosystem health, validating the ecosystem distress syndrome in a variety of ecosystems, both aquatic and terrestrial.

ISEH is dedicated to the development of integrated science striving to achieve ecosystem health. ISEH's membership includes scientists, educators, and students in the social, natural and health sciences, professionals in the areas of environmental management, law, and public policy, and a wide of decision makers working in areas such as public health, state of environment reporting and sustainable development.

Website: www.oac.uoguelph.ca/ISEH/; Email: iseh@oac.uoguelph.ca. Text and photo from ISEH.

Other News

Nurses' training. 'The nurses' training at Bangalore Manipal Hospital for one month was completed as planned', Tenpa TK writes. The nurses were exposed to work at a big hospital and to new and different medical equipment. The training was aimed at broadening the nurses' outlook, introducing them to new health facilities and motivating them to keep in touch with developing and changing health care.

Volunteer Movements. Drs Rikleen and Lobo and their family are still in Mundgod. Email communication is sporadic. Richard Patterson is back from India and plans to become involved with BODHI US.

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households that want to improve their lives and are good credit risks. "The hope is that families will do well and pay back due to the pressure of local officials and other relatives and neighbours who might benefit by the bank in the future," he says. "If the households do well we have an excellent chance of getting a high degree of payback. We will monitor this yearly and do follow-up interview work as needed."



Tibetan nurses from Mundgod who attended a continuing education course in Bangalore.

BODHI Co-Sponsors Dalai Lama to Australia 2002

BODHI Australia is a major underwriter of the proposed visit by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Australia in May, 2002. In turn, Colin and Susan are underwriting BODHI Australia, so BODHI will get risk-free exposure and, we hope, goodwill. We hope this generates increased support for our projects.