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BODHI TIMES

Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight
Founding Patron: His Holiness XIV Dalai Lama
Founded 1989

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 developing countries with local partners on innovative projects in the areas of health, education, the environment, micro-credit and human rights

The refugee's dilemma

Welcome to my home *Now* go back

As they become established, refugees and migrants may contribute to resource scarcity and resentment by increasing population pressure for the indigenous communities who originally dominated. Examples include the movement of lowland Bengalis to that country's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and Han Chinese migrants transferred to Tibet. In the 1960s, thousands of Chakmas were welcomed, legally, from the CHT to Arunachal Pradesh in northeast India. What's it like for those who are on the receiving side? Nalori Dhammei Chakma went to Arunachal Pradesh in late 2013 for an initial exploration in conflict resolution. We hoped she could talk to both Khamtis and Singphos. Tension simmers between them and their Chakma neighbours, and sometimes erupts — as recently, when the untimely murder of a Khamti by a Chakma in this volatile region inhibited Nalori's successful contact with those communities. Here's part of her report.

The Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight (BODHI) is employing me on a project-by-project basis. My first job is to explore methods of conflict resolution among Chakmas, Khamtis and Singphos. I went to meet a Singpho advocate at his village. He was well spoken and easy to talk to. I explained about BODHI and its work in India. I talked about SNEHA School and health camps in Mizoram.

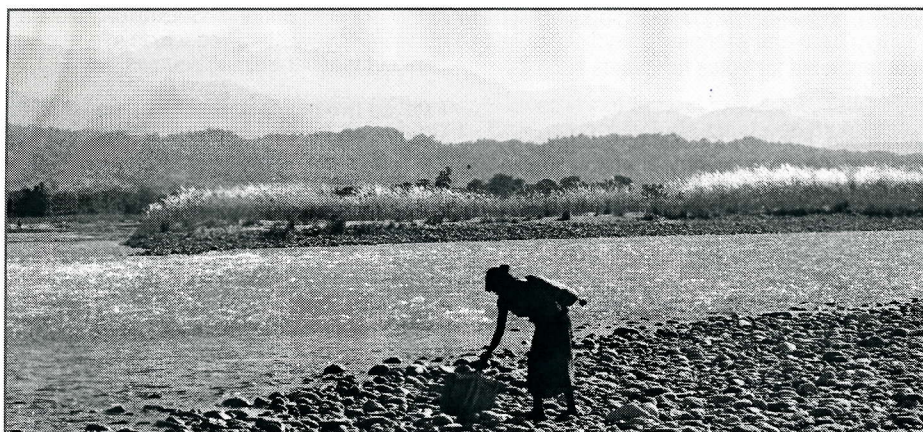
He talked about his community's tea plantations. He said that his village is better and does not have many problems, unlike others which need infrastructure such as roads to facilitate health and education. Regarding the conflict with the Chakma community, his perception is that there is peace in the area. He says that sometimes conflicts do occur but one shouldn't highlight it by saying that there is animosity between the communities. Politicians can say this for their own ends. He discussed the influx of Chakmas into the area, which he sees as a problem.

Also we discussed opium addiction among the youth. He is concerned, and said there are no rehabilitation centres nearby. It is not only the Singpho youth who are into it, but also some Chakma youth. I asked him whether the student body is doing anything. He said that the Chakma student body took up the issue and held a rally but that it was not inclusive. It only included Chakmas; if Singphos and youths from other communities had been involved then it would have been more successful.

I met with a Singpho monk and asked him about the children he brings from different villages. Some are orphans and some come from poor families who cannot provide two meals a day. He said that at least at the monastery they will not



Deori student at SNEHA



go hungry. They all go to school and Bhikku provides for them. It is a humble monastery [see photos at www.bodhi.net.au]. There are only boys, because according to Theravadin tradition girls cannot stay in a monastery that doesn't have nuns. I asked about the boys' higher education and he was concerned about that.

We are hoping to offer scholarships to Singpho and Khamti children as the first small step in a long-term strategy of conflict resolution. We are also exploring the formation of women's self-help groups in Khamti and Singpho villages.

Arunachal Pradesh, India. This and above photo: Nalori Chakma

3 Current Projects



Mobile medical clinics
CHT, Bangladesh
Remote medical & nursing care and health education



Pune, India. Early education & health, over 40 women's health, income generation & after-school classes



Sex education
Northern Thailand
For poor and migrant youth
Chiang Mai & Lamphun

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A looming Fortress World

Geneva. Following two meetings in Basel, at one of which I convened the first-ever symposium on Limits to Growth and Health to be held at a large international environmental health conference, I presented a seminar about population, limits to growth, the environment and family planning at the World Health Organization (WHO). I'd been invited by Prof Marleen Temmerman, in charge of Reproductive Health there. She is an honorary member of the Club of Rome, also associated with *The Limits to Growth*, that prescient, widely attacked but not discredited book. Prof Temmerman was receptive to my suggestion for a WHO working group to examine these issues, perhaps leading to a Technical Report, but its member states may be too conservative for this to occur.

Fortress World. In 2002, I attended my first meeting of a scenarios think tank for the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Our job was to consider how the global eco-social future would unfold this century, and what this would mean for human well-being. We developed five scenarios (a hyper-optimistic one was eventually dropped). One possible future was called Fortress World, a place of increasing polarisation where the haves are separated from the have-nots by strengthening barriers: financial, educational, electronic, physical, legal and social. The ultimate barrier between these groups (or castes) may be thought. In an idealised fortress world, discrimination is so legitimised, rationalised and normalised that the existence of anything else is forgotten in attempts to erase perpetual unease or guilt.

Such a future world was already discernable to a minority of us at that 2002 meeting. We of course were aware of countering trends to the Fortress World, such as the spread of literacy, the internet and mobile telephony. One co-chair argued that such a future was so unlikely that it should not even be discussed. He almost prevailed. At the next meeting Fortress World had been renamed, in an undemocratic and Orwellian coup, to 'Order from Strength'. I didn't at first realise which scenario this was intended to replace. The same academic was convinced that population was never a problem. One day he told me, airily, that 'Boserup had solved it.' He misinterpreted this eminent Danish anthropologist to be a supporter of Julian Simon and Mao Tse Tung in this respect. Both Mao and Simon called for even more people on the planet, arguing that as each new person has a brain and two hands they could therefore contribute to solutions. Such thinking was common in the 'Cornucopian

enchantment', which started in the West around the election of Ronald Reagan. With a faith reminiscent of King Canute, influential people entranced by its spells really did seem to believe that ingenuity would endlessly trump scarcity, and that the real fantasy is limits to growth. In this illusion, cheap energy is endless; perpetual population growth irrelevant.

Such concerns were mostly theoretical in 2002. Oil was cheap; the global food price low. Now, the persistently high energy cost is a major contributor to high food prices and other living costs, which in turn underlie Egyptian social unrest, European unemployment and widespread anxiety. Shale oil and coal seam gas have high drilling costs and slow extraction rates; these keep the energy price too high. Worse, the rush to burn them means that the 'carbon budget' will expire sooner than later, as we enter what Michael Klare calls the third carbon age.

The 1978 hope of 'Health for All by the Year 2000' faded as the Cornucopian enchantment took hold. Rather than development, hard work and social justice, market forces and 'trickle down' were claimed as easy answers. Foreign aid could be safely (and morally) reduced, leaving just enough for pragmatic purposes such as to



Silent mentor memorial, Tzu Chi Medical School, Hualien, Taiwan, honouring those who donate their bodies to medical science. September, 2013. Photo: C Butler

exchange aid for votes for events such as the Olympics.

Australia. For the time being, Australia remains the lucky country. Certainly many asylum seekers and economic migrants aspire to share our good life. The Australian Climate Commission — discontinued by new Prime Minister Tony Abbott — is one of several authoritative scientific bodies telling us that much of the world's remaining fossil fuels must remain in the ground, unburned, lest we suffocate from dangerous or even lethal climate change. Australia has fantastic solar potential, but its government supports the aggressive expansion of domestic coal seam gas production. Its supposedly

Christian values are also revealed as nationalism by its hard line on asylum seekers.

Kolkata. I returned in a car provided by Visva Bharati University founded by Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, where I spoke on health, disease emergence and climate change. During the first hour, we drove through typical rural India. Twice we were stopped. The first time, a 10-rupee 'donation' enabled us to pass. The second time I feared I was about to be kidnapped. The narrow road was crammed with political demonstrators, dozens of people, daubed in the green paint of a political party. There were no signs of police. This was a poor village, which like so many seemed to have no school. Several aggressive young men demanded our driver detour along a very narrow muddy road. It turned out fine.

This was my twelfth visit to India since 1985 but only my second to Kolkata. I went on my return to Australia. With the Geneva seminar fresh in my mind, it was painful to see rural India increasingly becoming a battlefield. Darjeeling, which I twice visited in the 1980s, is currently off limits due to insurgency.

India has long been a land of deference and inequality, illustrated for example by the caste system, where millions more or less accept their miserable conditions and status. But religious intolerance can explode and the persisting unfairness is increasingly intolerable; violence seems to be becoming more systemic and widespread.

I met Kris Chakma, our South Asia Program Coordinator until this August, and Nalori Dhammei Chakma, who recently finished her Masters degree in social work. We hope to foster harmonious relationships between the Chakmas, Singphos and Khamtis, different groups in Arunachal Pradesh [see Nalori's report on p 1]. I also met with Dr Dhires Chowdhury and two colleagues, whose organisation, Banchbo (www.banchbo.org.in), works in the Sundarbans and with the elderly in Kolkata. Nalori and I visited the Loreto School, through the kindness of Sister Flora. In 2010 and 2011, BODHI paid for teachers from the Youth Buddhist Society of Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh, to attend barefoot teacher training courses.

I stayed two nights at Belur Math, on the Ganges, in the foreigner's guesthouse of the Ramakrishna Mission. It was a place of deep peace. Ramakrishna and his followers are great advocates of inter-religious tolerance. While in India I was reminded of the Fortress World, as Tony Abbott (then in opposition) pledged to cut foreign aid, spending some on a Melbourne freeway. Such a misguided form of development is the last thing Australia should do. Rather, we can strive to reduce inequality through education and better health, especially for the poor, foster love and compassion and work for our common good.

Project updates

Youth sex education, Thailand

Arunrat Tangmunkongvorakul writes from Chiang Mai: 'The BODHI team was requested to provide training for youths in Wing 41 Air Force, whose parents work and stay in the air force. The training was in sexual and reproductive health education, so that youths could take care of themselves and have appropriate prevention against sexually transmitted diseases. The team was also invited to train youths in Naraesuan Army Camp in the Mae Tang district of Chiang Mai, situated 50 kms north from the city. Youths in the camp are rural kids studying at a school in Sankampang district (20 kms north of the city) and students from the agricultural college in Lamphun (a province adjacent to Chiang Mai, around 50 kms south). All 80 are females aged 6-18 years old, including hill-tribe people and lowland Thai people. All cooperated well and were interested in the topics we provided.'

'The team still has not received the desired good cooperation in approaching the slum communities for making appointments and gathering youths in the community. People continue to be unaware of the importance of our program. Many who have problems are too shy to join the activities. Community leaders and some parents feel that providing sexual and reproductive education to youths is like pointing out the way to the villain, rather than prevention. We therefore have to find a method to approach the community.'

'Time, staff and budget limitations led us to focus on disadvantaged young people in Chiang Mai Province only. We plan activities with following groups: young people in slums; other groups of non-formal education students in the city and nearby districts; hill-tribe people outside Chiang Mai City; and Shan young people at construction camp sites and other venues where target groups are available.'

Denis Wright Memorial Scholarships, Bangladesh

Moanoghar, Chittagong Hill Tracts. These have been a source of inspiration to the girl students. Runi Chakma, scholarship recipient in 2011, achieved a GPA 5 in this year's Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination. Among the girls in Moanoghar High School, Runi is the first ever to achieve 5 out of 5. Congratulations, Runi!

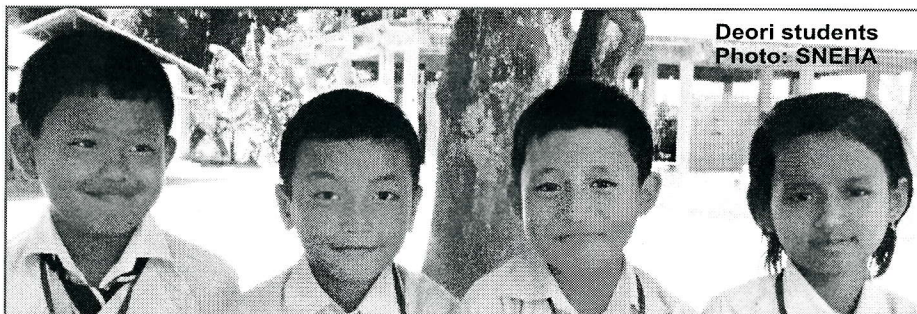
Dhaka. Brig Gen Aftab Uddin Ahmad (Retd) brings us up to date on the scholarship recipients. 'Kohinur Akter is working as a Junior Nurse in the Hi-Tech Multicare Hospital and also studying for the two-year Secondary School Certificate (SSC) at the same time under the Open University. She hopes to then do the 4-year Nursing Diploma Course and become a full-time nurse. Nusrat Jahan is working as Health Assistant in the Health Centre of URONUS Garments. She is also doing the two-year SSC course under the Open University and hopes to do the 4-year Diploma Course and enter the nursing profession as a qualified nurse. Rahima Khatun will finish her training in December this year and will be a hospital internee for three months, following which she will be a regular nurse's aide or assistant nurse in a hospital.'

'All diploma nursing courses under Government institutions, though less costly are full-time courses. It is very difficult to do a regular job and study simultaneously in such institutions. Private institutions on the other hand have evening courses but are quite expensive. We however hope that all these young ladies will be able to achieve their dreams. It warms my heart just to think about the transformation being brought into the lives of these two kids and their families. Thank you BODHI. May God bless you.' We thank Brig Gen Aftab for his help these three years and look forward to working with his replacement, Mr Zaki Hasan.

SNEHA School, Diyun, AP India

The fire extinguishers we provided were invaluable for an accidental fire in the supply room at SNEHA this year. No one was hurt but books were burnt. We are supplying a new library to the school, plus many fire extinguishers. The silver lining is the opportunity to purchase new and relevant books for children, teachers and staff over the next three years.

SNEHA will be inviting children from the local Government School to use the new library. The school's 335 students are mostly Chakma but include other communities such as Khamti, Singpho, Deori and Hajong.



Deori students
Photo: SNEHA

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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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The Pune Collection: learn, earn, thrive, grow

We are expanding work with our local partner, JEEVAK, in the slums of Pune, India, to include over 40 women's health and after-hours study groups. These are added to 2-5 year-old education and health, income generation and salaries for two kindergarten teachers and their assistants.

Over 40 women's health

We've begun an Over 40 Women's Health project for those at the other end of life from the 2-5 year-olds in our Tribal Early Health & Education program. 'We expected 50 women for the first health camp on August 30; 232 women and five men came! Four doctors from Aundh General Hospital came with two nurses, two men to give medicines in a big ambulance they brought, five boxes of calcium, iron and general medicines for colds, coughs and fevers, as well as skin ointment, eye drops and many other tablets for various ailments,' writes Karunadeepa.

Income generation

The Happy Stitch 'n' Bitch Girls in Hobart, Tasmania, have donated two sewing machines and a sewing course so that women can increase their marketable skills.

Nalori Dhammei visited Pune and reports, 'These sewing classes are giving a chance for the women to be economically independent. Most are dependent on men either a father, brother or husband. They can earn around Rs.100 per day. This is a tremendous initiative which brings the women out from the four walls of their houses. Along with learning the skill of tailoring, it is bringing them together. They have plans to open a business venture together by forming a self-help group in the

future. They mentioned that they want to be trained in embroidery so that they stitch better clothes for business.'

After-hours study groups

These classes accommodate children who have difficult home lives, often with no electricity. They study maths, English, science, history, geography, civics, Hindi, Marathi and all other subjects taught in school. The children Nalori Dhammei visited were also eager to learn computers and art drawing.

The objectives are to:

- * reduce children's dropout from school
- * develop interest in education
- * provide guidance in their studies
- * provide extracurricular activities apart from their studies
- * develop their confidence

- * help them achieve their goals or ambitions
- * increase their school performance

Photograph below: Jai Bhim Nagar study class, with 14 girls and 6 boys. Karunadeepa says: 'The teacher is Kalpana Patole. She is unmarried and 42 years of age. Kalpana is staying with her mother, who is a widow. She has been teaching our study class for six years.'

'Due to poverty she was not able to continue her education so she left school at an early age. Due to my encouragement she is studying externally and is now taking her first-year college exams. She is also learning basic computer skills in our office and working for us as a crèche teacher. She is very hardworking. She thanks BODHI for providing her salary, which is very useful for her living.'



Photo: JEEVAK



A new generation Rebecca and Nalori

Welcome Rebecca Rubin (right) and Nalori Dhammei Chakma (left) to our BODHI family. Rebecca, daughter of BODHI US director Dr Marty Rubin, is going to Pune for six weeks in January to teach art, computers and English. Nineteen-year-old Rebecca wants to become a medical doctor. We hope she can get a head start by participating in the Over 40 Women's Health program. Nalori recently completed her Master's degree in Social Work at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and works with us on a project-by-project basis.

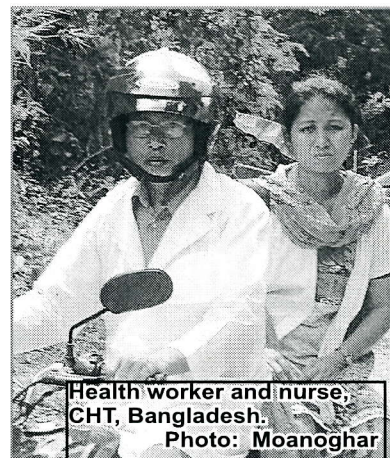


Mobile medical clinics & income generation

Moanoghar, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh. From Moanoghar's annual report: Apart from regular weekly medical check-ups and treatment, the Health Educator/Nurse in close cooperation with the Medical Officer and Medical Assistant conducted three awareness-raising sessions every month, one in each of the three nodes (Rangapani-Vedvedi, Khammar Para and Tanchangya Para). The sessions, attended by 540 people, covered immunisation, nutrition, safe drinking water and sanitation and pre-natal, natal and post-natal care.

During National Immunisation Day, our community volunteers mobilise parents to bring in their children for vaccines. Boils/abscess, diarrhoea, coughs, scabies, viral fevers, gastric problems, back and joint pain and minor injuries topped the list of complaints. One child got measles, two women contracted malaria and three men (and one child) came down with chicken pox.

The UK's Silbury Fund donated BDT 62,000 (AU\$1,000) to BODHI for the purchase raw materials (yarns, clothes, dyeing materials, and chemicals) for weaving and sewing courses attended by twenty participants.



Health worker and nurse, CHT, Bangladesh.
Photo: Moanoghar

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