



Hot Water

brings healthier living to remote Tibetan families

Tashi Delek & Happy New Year!

The Tibetan New Year (Losar) is on 11 February and welcomes in the year of the water snake. It is said the year of the snake can bring significant change. Let's hope it will bring positive change and progress for Tibet.

We always feel very inspired when we put together our newsletters. It reminds us how Tibet Relief Fund's work gives hope and brings real change to Tibetans in dire need.

In this issue we focus on projects in Tibet and I hope, when you read about them, you find as much inspiration and motivation as we did. Whether it is the new maternity unit in eastern Tibet that will help save lives of Tibetan mothers and babies, or a school in a remote village where young Tibetans are receiving an education for the first time in their lives, none of our work would be possible without your generosity.

There are many ways to support us, some more energetic than others! If you love cycling why not join us for the first RideLondon-Surrey 100 cycle ride? Have a look on pages 6 and 7 for all of our sponsored challenges and other fundraising ideas and updates.

If you would like to make a donation, please call us on 020 7272 1414 or visit our website www.tibetrelieffund.co.uk.

For more information on any of the subjects covered in this issue, please email us at trf@tibetrelieffund.co.uk.

Philippa Carrick

Philippa Carrick and all at Tibet Relief Fund



You may remember in autumn 2011 we sent you an appeal that highlighted the importance of clean, safe water and the difference it can make to the health of Tibetans living in remote communities. Thanks to your generosity, the appeal was a great success. In 2012 we were able to send a grant that was used to give 40 families insulated water tanks, ensuring clean and safe water in their homes. It also covered vital training in health and hygiene to lots more Tibetans.

Women in particular appreciate these tanks, which enable storage of hot water in their homes for several days. They enjoy having warm water and soap which they can use whenever needed - particularly during the freezing winter months. The extremely cold weather previously discouraged people from anything more than occasional contact with icy water. Having tanks installed also encourages good hygiene practices such as washing hands before meals.

The education programme also helps villagers to make an action plan to improve the overall health in the village including maternal and child health, hygiene and HIV/AIDS prevention.

CONTENTS

Education in eastern Tibet page 2-3
Maternal and child health page 4-5

Fundraising fun! page 6-7
The 2013 raffle page 8

Dreams can come true

The opening of a school in a remote Tibetan village brings education and hope

Education is a basic human right but for many Tibetans being able to go to school is only a distant dream. Not so for some children living in remote eastern Tibet. Thanks to the wonderful generosity of our supporters their dream has become reality.

We first supported the building of a school way back in 2002. Last year we sent a grant to cover improvements to the roof and water supply, as well as bedding, shoes and stationery for the children.

When we were first contacted by the project's founder, a Tibetan who had been born and brought up in the area, there were only four literate adults in the three local villages. Many of the younger generation had moved to urban areas to seek a better life. Sadly, lacking in skills and with no education, most ended up living in slums with no livelihood.

There have been a huge number of obstacles in building and establishing the school, not least the local Chinese bureaucracy and the geographical remoteness of the area. It is a tremendous achievement and testament to the tenacity of the local villagers that that the school has now been up and running for nearly three years.

The school has to make do with very basic facilities and few resources, using greased wooden planks instead of ink, paper and pens. There is no running water or heating, but it does have lighting that is powered by solar panels, which Tibet Relief Fund

has also funded. Despite this, it brings highly valued literacy skills and hope to the community so they can have a sustainable future with education.

At the moment 23 children regularly attend classes in Tibetan reading and writing, religion, history, geography, music and basic hygiene. The community wants to provide boarding accommodation for nine further children who live far away as travelling to school is difficult, especially in winter.

Presently, about half of the local school-age children attend the school regularly. Many families still prefer to have the children work alongside them in the fields and mountainsides but at least they now have a choice and their children do have access to a free basic education.

A team of local volunteers has been established to run the school. They have high hopes of sending some of the most able children to a monastic college to train as traditional Tibetan doctors and midwives.

This is a pressing need as birth survival is low, child mortality rates are high and the overall healthcare in the community is very limited. Currently when someone becomes seriously ill, the only way they can receive medical attention is to undertake an arduous three-day journey on horseback to the nearest clinic. Families without any horses have to carry the ill person themselves, in which case the journey can take significantly longer.



Confidence in the school is growing as it is fast becoming the hub of the village with older members of the community using the school as a meeting place. Social gatherings and religious celebrations are also regularly being held there. This means those children who do not go to school can still benefit from the range of activities that take place, supporting the community and culture of the area.

We are immensely heartened and inspired by what has been achieved and the difference the building of a school has made to the local community.

No words are sufficient to express our gratitude ...

Message from Tsering, who was born in the area and approached Tibet Relief Fund to support his vision to bring education to his home village in Tibet.

The opening of the school was a historical moment for the village and it has made tremendous progress in the short time it has been in existence.

When the project started, the local people could scarcely imagine the reality of what it would be like to have a school in their village. The only educational establishment had been the local monastery, and this was burned to the ground during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

During this time, anyone literate would try to teach basic reading and writing in total secret to a handful of children, and the only available literature was religious books. This is how I was taught to read and write and I remember being drilled in the importance of keeping this activity, and my teacher, absolutely secret.

Thank you Tibet Relief Fund for your support in setting up the school project, and for continuing to support the community.

The local people have done so much with the funding already provided and it has come at such a crucial time for them.

Without it, the drain of young people to the cities would have no hope of being halted, and the way of life of the community would have been in great jeopardy as the elders passed away. No words are sufficient to express our gratitude.

NB. For security reasons the name of the school and area cannot be given. Names have been changed to protect identity.



TIBET RELIEF FUND



Pregnancy & childbirth in eastern Tibet

A dangerous journey into the unknown

We first learnt the degree to which women living in remote, high altitude areas of Tibet face a dangerous journey into the unknown during pregnancy and childbirth when we were approached by a small, innovative NGO working in the field in remote areas of Tibet.

It is a sad fact that in these remote areas four out of every nine pregnancies will result in the death of either mother or child. Sadder still is that some of these deaths could be prevented with simple hygiene practices such as hand washing and cutting umbilical cords with clean implements.

Without a basic knowledge of maternal health, and lacking trained birth attendants to advise them, the lives of both pregnant women and their babies are all too often at risk. The proposal put to us addressed the life-threatening lack of maternal health knowledge by providing basic health training.

Tibet Relief Fund has provided a grant that enabled basic health and hygiene training DVDs to be made. These are shown to villagers on portable players. Field training sessions on maternal health have also been held.

These sessions were given to groups of Tibetans including community leaders and practitioners of traditional Tibetan medicine. Following these sessions, trainers distributed resource materials, teaching aids and literature, along with birth packs containing specialised hygienic equipment, for the students to take to their local areas.

By providing these resources, trainers ensured that those who received the training were then able to pass their newly found knowledge on to other members of the community. In this way, many more people were able to benefit from the training of a few individuals!

As a direct result of this project, not only are survival rates for pregnant women and their babies increasing, but basic healthcare practices are now much more widely used. At follow-up training sessions, previous participants shared their enthusiasm for the programme and spoke about the difference it has already made in preventing unnecessary deaths in childbirth.

"It is humbling and inspiring to be in contact with these strong women. Their willingness and thirst for knowledge and skill is the inspiration for our work"

Project leader and field officer

The costs and risks of childbirth in remote communities in Tibet

For one remote village in Tibet, the nearest hospital is between six and eight hours journey over difficult terrain. Transport can cost 1400 yuan (£140) and that is if one is lucky enough to be able to find a vehicle.

Once there, it costs £120 to register, and without this money the mother will be turned away, even if she urgently needs a caesarean section or is in danger of bleeding to death. A caesarean section can cost £500.

Mothers-to-be and their families are all too often unable to afford these costs and are left to hope for a normal healthy birth which, tragically, cannot be relied upon. One community leader reported that in 2011, out of ten pregnancies, five young women and their babies subsequently died.



Funding brings a maternity clinic to the area

Following on from the success of local training sessions, it became evident that greater long-term benefits could come through building a maternity clinic for nomadic communities in eastern Tibet's high altitude valleys. Plans were set out, permissions granted and we were again approached to see if Tibet Relief Fund could help.

In 2011, our spring appeal focused on the challenges facing mothers-to-be in this remote area, the appalling mortality rates for both mothers and newborn babies and the urgent need for a clinic.

Thanks to your generous support and an unexpected large contribution from a supporter and his wife, a proportion of which was matched by his company, we are delighted to report we have managed to fund the first phase of construction! Building work began in October 2012 and is due to be completed in the autumn of this year. The clinic will provide birthing suites, a pre-natal check-up clinic and family rooms.

To ensure this project continues to thrive, we are now looking for further funding! Monies raised will be used to purchase equipment for the maternity wing, provide transport from remote communities and cover salary costs for trained birth attendants.

As more practitioners are trained and go on to empower their own communities with skills and knowledge, this vital project will continue to improve maternal and child health among Tibetans.

"I am training to be a Tibetan doctor and all these skills will be very useful when I return to my home community. There are no doctors there; I will teach others in the community."

Tibetan doctor student and training class participant



Photos: P4: ◀ Group photo after training session. This Page - Top: ▲ A typical training class session. Right ◀ top: Practicing how to resuscitate a baby middle: Practicing tying the umbilical cord Bottom: Practicing how to prevent bleeding after the birth.



Aiming high...

Super supporters Carole and Neil have both been passionate about supporting Tibet and Tibetan causes for many, many years and Carole has done numerous sponsored events for Tibet including a skydive and an abseil.

In 2012, in celebration of their 66th birthdays and in aid of Tibet Relief Fund, they decided to take up the challenge to climb Stok Kangri, which at 6,141m (over 20,147 ft!), is the highest mountain in Ladakh in the Indian Himalaya.

Their eight-day, high-altitude trek culminated on Day 7 in the ascent of Stok Kangri. Unfortunately, very close to the summit, at around 6,000 metres, bad weather closed in and they were advised by their leader not to continue over an extremely difficult and dangerous ridge that led to the summit.

Having left base camp at one o'clock in the morning, they had already been climbing relentlessly for almost seven hours. This included crossing a glacier and zigzagging up a very steep snowfield (40 degrees steep!) for almost four hours before finally climbing to the ridge. Younger members of the group who managed to reach the summit experienced a complete white-out. They all said it was the most difficult and challenging thing they had done.

Here at Tibet Relief Fund, we are hugely in awe of Carole and Neil's incredible achievement, and not just for the sheer physical challenge but also for setting a whopping £6,000 target to raise! Incredibly they exceeded this and raised a staggering £6,250 (including the ever valuable gift aid). This is being split between Tibet Relief Fund and Friends of Conservation, a Himalayan community support project.

All of us would like to say a massive thank you for their courage in undertaking such a daunting challenge and for their amazing support! They remain a motivating example to all of us.

◀ Photos - Top: Carole and Neil on the ridge to the summit at approximately 6,000 metres. Bottom: Carole and Neil on the snowfield with Sukman their guide



Supporter Spotlight

Amazing support for Tibet Relief Fund this year comes from Graham Titcombe who is taking on the incredible challenge of running one of the toughest footraces in the world, the Marathon des Sables a six-day, 156 mile marathon across the Sahara desert, in aid of our work. This is a gruelling challenge but Graham knows that Tibetan refugees need our help and he is hoping to raise a significant amount with this extraordinary event.

You can support Graham via his Justgiving site: www.justgiving.com/GrahamMDS2013



We are also delighted that one of our very own members of staff, Office Manager, Kathryn Smith has decided to run the Virgin London Marathon for Tibet Relief Fund. Kat, who in recent years hasn't run much other than for her daily commuter train to London, has decided to take part in the London Marathon to raise a minimum of £1,600 for our work. You can help Kat achieve her ambitious target by donating to her Justgiving page: www.justgiving.com/kathryn-smith4

We are really grateful to both Graham and Kat for their amazing commitment to the Tibetan people.



Run For Tibet!!!

On 14th July six Tibet Relief Fund supporters will have the fantastic opportunity to run the British 10k London run, passing many of London's famous sites including the Houses of Parliament, Tower Bridge and the Thames – each year the route is lined with approximately 40,000 spectators cheering on the 25,000 participants! Last year a fantastic team of supporters were racing around with Tibetan flags bringing Tibet to the heart of London and the cheering crowds.

Places are filling up quickly, so grab a place as soon as possible!



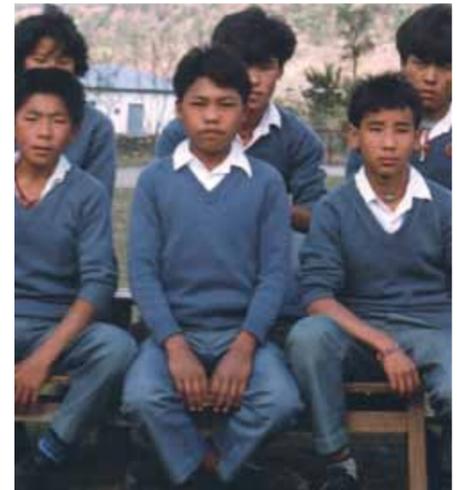
The BBC Radio 4 Appeal A massive success!

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who donated to our 2012 BBC Radio 4 appeal broadcast on 28 October 2012 ... we are delighted to report the appeal raised nearly £13,000! We would also like to thank the BBC for its support and help with the appeal and for giving us such a wonderful opportunity.

The appeal was made by Tibet Relief Fund's very own Sponsorship Coordinator Tsering Passang, who is himself a direct beneficiary of Tibet Relief Fund. Tsering was born in Jampaling Tibetan settlement in western Nepal and, in 1995, through Tibet Relief Fund, he was given the opportunity to study at a college in England.

At first he was more than a little nervous at the prospect of making the appeal. But on the day of the recording Tsering was a consummate professional, and even thought to bring his Tibetan flute to play! So impressed was the BBC producer at his playing she made sure to include it in the appeal.

Tsering is overwhelmed by the response and feedback and is thrilled he has been able to help Tibet Relief Fund in such a unique way. You can still give to the appeal via our justgiving page, <http://www.justgiving.com/tsering-appeal> and you can read more and hear his appeal by visiting our website: www.tibetrelieffund.co.uk/home/bbc-radio-4-appeal



RideLondon-Surrey 100 Be part of history!

Were you inspired by the wonderful cyclists of Team GB in the London Olympics 2012? You can now follow in the path of Bradley Wiggins, Sarah Storey and Chris Hoy by signing up to RideLondon-Surrey 100.

RideLondon-Surrey 100 is set to be the UK's biggest and best cycling race. Designed to challenge recreational riders and give more experienced riders the chance to test themselves against some of the best

athletes, the event really has something for everyone.

The race is a 100 mile-long modified version of the Olympic Road Race route. Starting in the new Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park the course takes riders past some of London's most iconic landmarks and into Surrey's picturesque country roads and rolling hills, taking on the famous Box Hill before coming back to the capital for a triumphant finish on the Mall.

Ready for a challenge?!

Would you like to take up a sponsored challenge in aid of our work? Ever thought of jumping out of a plane at 15,000 feet or abseiling down one of the tallest buildings in the UK? Or would you like to take the wonderful opportunity to trek to the home of the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, a unique expedition combining awesome Himalayan trekking with a visit to India's exiled Tibetan community.

If you are interested in getting involved in any of the above events mentioned on these pages, or have any ideas or events of your own that you would like to tell us about, please call the office on **020 7272 1414** or email us on trf@tibetrelieffund.co.uk.



▲ Photo: Sign for a Tibetan business selling Dri (female yak) milk and yoghurt



"My family lost everything in the earthquake and we have to start all over again. I am grateful for people who support earthquake victims and provide us loan to restart our shop again. This gives us hope and we will soon be able to support ourselves"

Kalsang Wangdue
A loan recipient in Yushu

Developing Tibetan businesses

In April 2010 a huge earthquake devastated Yushu in eastern Tibet. Tibet Relief Fund sent out an appeal and received a very generous response. We sent some of the funds raised to a partner agency in the field to give immediate practical relief in the form of tents, food and clothing. We have also supported vital work to help Tibetans living in outlying areas to rebuild their lives and we continue to send grants out to aid vital community rebuilding for Tibetans living in these areas.

This year we have partnered with a local organisation that helps Tibetans re-establish and develop their businesses and trades by providing skills, business management training and seed money.

As the slow process of rebuilding Yushu takes place, migrant entrepreneurs have recognised the area offers plenty of opportunities and they can easily set up new enterprises. In contrast, the majority of local Tibetans simply do not have the resources to re-establish previously successful businesses. They are still trying to eke out a daily existence whilst living in temporary tents and are hampered by lack of money and materials.

This means local Tibetans are being delivered a double blow, not only have they lost their homes and livelihoods, but they have to compete with incomers who have no such worries. Around 85 per cent of businesses are now owned by people from outside of Yushu, and this number continues to increase.

Tibet Relief Fund has provided £7,000 to fund small business loans for Yushu earthquake victims. Using a co-operative model to ensure proper management and accountability, the loans will be managed by small lending groups, with seven loans per group, an average loan being £1,900. The programme had already successfully made loans to a number of Tibetans who have developed a diverse range of businesses including a motorbike repair shop, a noodle restaurant, a shower house, tailoring, an English language training and a taxi service.

The loans will be repaid over two years and re-circulated among local Tibetan communities. The aim is to grow the programme by adding more loans to each co-op and establishing further lending groups.

Tibet Relief Fund 2013 Raffle

TURN JUST £1 INTO £1,000!!! Or enjoy other prizes such as an Apple i-pad, Kindle, a weekend retreat or ethically sourced clothes and jewellery!

Our raffle is just the ticket! With every ticket purchased you not only make a difference to the lives of Tibetans in need, but you are also in with a chance of winning one of our fantastic prizes including a cash prize of £1,000 for one lucky winner!

Each ticket you sell raises vital funds that will be used to support Tibetans in India, Nepal and Tibet making a lasting difference to the lives of extremely poor and vulnerable people.

If you would like to order more raffle books you can call us on **020 7272 1414** or order your tickets online from our website www.tibetrelieffund.co.uk. There is no limit on the number of tickets you can buy or sell so get all your friends and family on board and help us raise urgent funds!

The raffle will be drawn on 6th July 2013, the Dalai Lama's birthday. In the meantime, please see our website for a full list of prizes.



Patron: Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama
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