



AMERICAN HIMALAYAN FOUNDATION | What matters most



What matters most...

Shelter, safety, education, health, opportunity, faith, hope, kindness.

These are the things we can offer — that help vulnerable people put some distance between themselves and desperation, allow them dignity and give them hope — and they are at the heart of our mission.



The American Himalayan Foundation is dedicated to helping the people and the ecology of the Himalaya.

Education



It's what matters most. Nothing can be more transformational.

Once you have it, no one can take it from you. It's what breaks the cycle of poverty, gives our minds the freedom to decide and opens a world of opportunity. In my lifetime, I have seen its effect on a whole generation of Sherpas and Tibetans from the remote villages in the Khumbu to the nomads in Eastern Tibet; they have gone from being porters and yak herders to doctors, lawyers, community workers.

I have also seen what it does not to have it. As my father famously said, "I climbed Everest so you wouldn't have to." — Norbu Tenzing Norgay

A school in remote Dolpo. 63 schools in the Everest area. Schools in the far reaches of Tibet, in Mustang and in Tibetan refugee settlements.

From kindergarten to college, we try to create a path to the future for young students: with schools and hostels, books and shelves to put them on, lunches and uniforms, teachers and scholarships, clean drinking water and generators to keep the study lights on. Whatever it takes so that they can learn. The power of education is a huge part of what we believe in, and what we support.



Head down, gettin' it done at Tapriza school in Dolpo. After this class comes lunch, and the school cook is good!



17,500
children in school this year

Health



What matters most: That the work gets done. That our treatment has eased pain and suffering in another child and brought new hope for a better future. That despite daunting odds, HRDC continues to come through a winner in the cause of the disabled child and through rain and shine the hospital on the hilltop joyfully welcomes the children with disabilities to begin life anew with new hope. — Dr. Ashok Banskota

Mending 46,000 of Nepal's poorest disabled children — pro bono — doesn't seem to have slowed down Dr. Banskota over the last 23 years. What he started as a tiny clinic with a simple mission — surgery for young boys and girls from poor families who would otherwise suffer for a lifetime — has grown under his care into an amazing hospital and a country-wide network that identifies and treats thousands of children with crippling disabilities every year.

The young patients often arrive in their parent's arms physically twisted and painfully shy, but thanks to HRDC's young team of surgeons — and a staff that takes emotional rehab just as seriously as physical — they walk out with big smiles on their faces and new lives in front of them. Now, instead of being a burden, or even abandoned, they can finally go to school, hold their heads high, and help out their families.

Don't worry, you'll be fine soon. In Mustang, we add health workers and medicines to health posts so that local folks can get better care.





A young artist on the mend at the Hospital and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children (HRDC).

Shelter



Everyone longs for a good life. But too many people in the Himalaya are so trapped by poverty and political instability that shelter and safety are beyond their reach. They live at the margins: destitute Tibetan elders, stateless refugees, orphaned and abandoned children, those with disabilities — all in places where the margins are razor thin.

To help these most vulnerable people find space in their lives for some hope and some joy matters deeply to us. We offer a hand up — shelter, safety and opportunity. It is at the heart of what we do. — Erica Stone

Tibetan elders, after they fled Tibet, have had the hard and uncertain lives of refugees. They may have been guerilla soldiers, or perhaps they broke rocks building roads for one rupee a day. Many of them ended up penniless and alone, their families scattered or gone. To sit in the sun outside of a place they can call home with tea and some company brings these lovely elders peace.

For orphans and abandoned children, having shelter and people who care lets them step out of the shadows of fear and hunger. Getting enough to eat, having friends and going to school all bring them towards a brighter future. The parents of mentally or physically challenged children often cannot take care of them and they are just left alone. Being in a safe and loving environment gives them the chance to grow and learn to cope in the world.

Newly arrived Tibetan refugees, bruised from their escape, need a safe refuge and medical care, then a home or a school. The freedom to hold a picture of His Holiness is precious and marks the beginning of their new life.



Rockin' it at Navjyoti, an amazing place for special needs children.



The elderly home in Kathmandu is for Tibetan elders who are lonely and have no means so they can spend their years as a family and receive care. I have felt very close to this home from its beginning. It is always very happy to see our elders doing pujas. — Amala



Tibet



After more than 50 years in exile, most Tibetans, especially the new generation, are still vulnerable. Elders who left Tibet are struggling to survive; communities in the refugee camps struggle to make ends meet. Tibetans inside Tibet live with fear and constraints. What matters most: hope and opportunity for our community who are spread all across in India and Nepal in refugee camps and, more importantly, for the Tibetans inside Tibet. — Tsedo



Schools and scholarships, medical clinics, warm homes for elders, clean water, bridges, enterprise funds — however we can help...

Culture

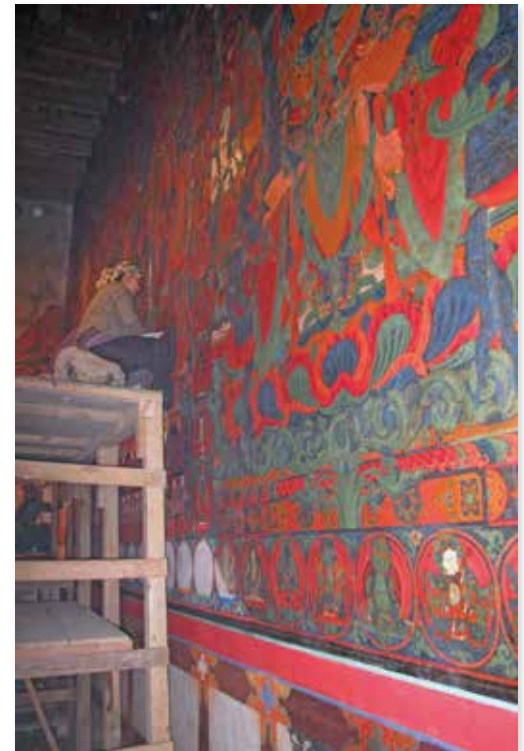


What matters most to me is believing that conservation can not only preserve precious masterpieces but keep an ancient culture alive. It is believing in art as manifestation of the unworldly and through its conservation reviving faith and hope in people's hearts. The devotion of people, together with the preciousness of giving a better future, a different choice where there was none: that is what matters most. — Luigi Fieni, Mustang conservator

AHF's restoration of Mustang's magnificent gompas and their precious 15th century wall paintings ignited a cultural revival that has carried with it a renewal of interest in religious tradition and pride in being Loba. Monastic schools, now thriving, are becoming magnets for Buddhist study. Lay schools include lessons on Tibetan language, song and dance. Fifteen day care centers up and down the length of Mustang keep children safe and happy while their parents work the fields. The new generation of Lobas are joining local youth groups — and building bridges and irrigation canals at home instead of leaving Mustang.



That these key pieces of Mustang's cultural identity are more vibrant can only help the Lobas as they navigate the future — because as access to the formerly forbidden kingdom grows easier, the winds of change will surely sweep up the Kali Gandaki.





The fields are yielding more crops as local youth groups tackle irrigation and drainage projects, and those projects are giving the young some cash and respect in their communities.



Keep the faith



In the Buddhist tradition, compassion and love are seen as two aspects of the same thing: compassion is the wish for another being to be free from suffering; love is wanting them to have happiness.

— His Holiness, the Dalai Lama

For Tibetans, and most people of the high Himalaya, Buddhist faith is woven deeply into the fabric of their lives. Monastic schools and nunneries are essential parts of that fabric — as centers of worship and learning, and as the places that cradle and nurture the Tibetan spirit.

AHF helps support monks and nuns and the religious institutions they learn and pray in because, for Tibetans, keeping the faith is what matters most. And a spiritual tradition that can continue to emphasize love and compassion in the face of terrible repression and cruelty is not only essential to Tibet's cultural survival, but has something to teach the rest of the world.



STOP Girl Trafficking



AHF does important work on many fronts, much of which leaves me awestruck and grateful. But nothing impresses me more than the foundation's partnership with Dr. Aruna Uprety and her STOP Girl Trafficking program. She is both a visionary and a pragmatist, who simultaneously comprehends the immensity of the trafficking problem and has figured out effective methods for alleviating it. When I met some of the girls who have been protected by Aruna's efforts, I was blown away by the profound impact she has made on each of their lives. When I ponder the fact that many thousands of such lives have been transformed by Aruna and SGT, my congenital pessimism is supplanted by hope — not only for Nepal, but for the rest of our troubled world, as well. — Jon Krakauer

The power of an idea: up to 20,000 girls in Nepal are trafficked every year, traded for pennies into brothels or indentured servitude. Aruna wanted to stem this tragic, often fatal, exodus by **preventing** girls from being sold. How? By educating them. A young girl was at risk when her family was destitute, and traditionally, as a girl, she had very little worth to them. But if she could go to school she could learn skills that would give her value in their eyes, and in her own. She was no longer expendable.

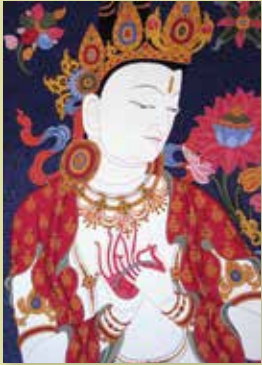
We have been partnering with Aruna for fifteen years to keep young girls from becoming slaves. And now we have 10,000 girls safe and in school — 10,000 young lives whose futures are not clouded over, but are something hopeful, something with wings.



As we go into ever poorer communities, where literacy rates can be as low as 5%, the girls there often need more support. This year we have begun extra tutoring for them — and over 200 SGT graduates are thrilled to do it.



Prevention is rescue without
the suffering.



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*Many thanks to the
generous person who
donated the cost of
producing this publication.*

Commitment



AHF's touchstone rock. Richard spent his first night in the Himalayas in the Tibetan settlement where this mani rock, turns out, is still part of the landscape.

Dear Friends,

What matters for us at AHF is that we are truly helpful. It's not easy and it doesn't happen overnight. But we have passionate and visionary local partners, and we work with them long term so that together we can make the kinds of transformational changes that help many, many people — in whatever way they need most.

It takes commitment and patience and thoughtful work. And the rewards are huge: seeing the elation of a disabled young man who we helped fight discrimination and get admitted to college; the tearful bliss of a young girl being told she will not be going to work but back to school; the beatific glow of an elderly woman who, for the first time in forty years, is free from pain and shame of an illness; the awe of a monk who sees beautiful works of art come to life after centuries of being hidden; the thankfulness of three siblings who can now walk without suffering.

Last month I was privileged to celebrate my precious forty year friendship with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and I was reminded once again of what he often says, "if you want to be happy, help others."

Please, make AHF part of your giving. Help bring shelter, education and opportunity — and yes, happiness — to the Himalaya.

Best personal regards,

Richard C. Blum
Chairman

Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries.
Without them humanity cannot survive.

– His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Save a life, change a life. Please be kind! Your gift goes a very long way.

\$100 saves a girl from being sold and keeps her in school for a year.



Want her to be free for her whole life? **\$1,000** takes her all the way through to graduation.

\$125 frees a nun in Tibet from begging for food so she can study the dharma (think of the merit!).

\$140 buys a rural Nepali woman a pair of goats — eight legs up on being a budding entrepreneur. She can buy food for her family, and get some respect in her community. Or, **\$60** for the nanny, **\$80** for the billy. That's a gift that keeps on giving (and you can name the first kid).

\$150 changes a disabled child's life, with surgery and care from the incomparable Dr. Banskota.

\$300 takes an orphan in Lhasa off the streets and gives them shelter, healthy meals and school for a whole year — and a big (76 children!) new family.

\$20,000 builds a bridge over troubled waters so 1,000 Tibetan nomads can move their precious yak herds. That's the key to their survival. (You could get 99 friends to help with this.)



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