



AMERICAN HIMALAYAN FOUNDATION | What matters most





What matters most? Taking care of people who are in need but have no one else. Keeping  
Stopping Girl Trafficking. Developing lasting, respectful partnerships. And working with



ancient cultures alive. Building stronger communities. Preparing children for the future.  
heart.

# HEALTH CARE

Supporting hospitals  
and clinics and the  
people who bring  
medical care to those  
who need it most



When we met Dr. Ashok Banskota in 1988, he was treating disabled children free of charge in a makeshift hospital, and he badly needed an autoclave. We got him one, and as AHF has grown over the decades

since then, so has our relationship with Dr. Banskota. In 1993, we helped build the Hospital

and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children, HRDC, in Banepa and began funding surgeries as well as an orthopedic residency to give Dr. B. “good hands” so he could heal more children. Today, HRDC’s community-based rehabilitation brings their trademark care and expertise to suffering children in some of Nepal’s most far-flung corners. Through 21 years and over 56,000 transformed young lives, the HRDC campus continues to be one of the most inspirational places you’ll ever visit.

We see Dr. Banskota and the success



of his team in Nepal as emblematic of how AHF approaches healthcare — find great local partners and give them the resources they need to best serve their communities.

Elsewhere in the Himalaya, primary care is a primary concern. In Mustang we partner with Lobas to supply clinics with medicine and equipment and train villagers as health workers, birth attendants and lab technicians. In some of the most underserved Tibetan camps and villages, we make sure people can get both traditional and Western medical care. Malaria test kits for refugees in the jungles of Arunachal Pradesh, hygiene education for nomads on the Tibetan plateau and medicine for aging veterans all fill a real need.

## *Gita’s new life*

*Gita is from Bardia in Nepal’s far west and was born with a defect in her left leg that left her unable to walk for the first 15 years of her life. Her parents realized it when she was very young, but they couldn’t afford to have her treated. She didn’t start school until she was nine. A year ago, she was found by an HRDC field team, referred to the HRDC hospital, underwent a life-changing operation, now does PT three times a day and walks with barely a limp.*

*But HRDC was responsible for more than her physical rehabilitation. Her cousin told us “Before, she used to say ‘this is my life, there is nothing I can do about it,’ but something happened to her in the hospital, something more than just the operation. She returned with hope in her eyes.”*





**W**e want to change the dark fate of thousands of girls in Nepal: girls who have their lives torn up by being trafficked into slavery or forced into child marriage. Why? Because their parents are desperately poor and girls are worth the least in their family.

To prevent this, we educate them. This was the genius of our partner, Dr. Aruna Uprety. She felt that, if girls could go to school, they would learn skills that would give them value in their families' eyes and create a shift in the way girls were treated.

At the beginning, she had to go door to door in villages to persuade parents to let their daughters go to school. 52 girls went that first year. But we persevered. This year we have 10,750 girls in school and safe.

There are challenges. The face of trafficking keeps changing and becoming, if anything, more evil. As we have gone deeper into the poorest villages, we have had to bolster the schools with books and extra teachers, mentor the girls more and

offer extra Friday classes.

But the successes have been sweet. Despite being one-down in many ways, SGT girls score higher than their counterparts on national exams.

Families now are more receptive to sending their daughters to school. Dropout rates are miniscule. But the huge success has been the girls themselves. By the end of their schooling, they have become articulate, confident young women. And grateful.

Stopping girl trafficking won't happen overnight. But every girl saved is a victory.

**And each girl will help many others.**

# SAVING GIRLS

10,750 girls in school.  
Prevention is rescue  
without the suffering.



## *Bimala and Anuradha*

*When we first met Anuradha, she broke down in tears as her mother, Bimala, told of being tricked into marriage at 13, trafficked to India, enslaved and eventually abandoned. "I don't want Anuradha to marry, ever," said Bimala. Anuradha is now in grade 10 and doing well in her studies. Bimala said that education had helped her daughter grow and that she can now appreciate what her mother went through and is grateful for her sacrifice and support. And they are both determined nothing like that will ever happen to Anuradha.*



Education has the power to transform lives and uplift communities. It's the spark that illuminates the changing world for young students, opening their eyes and preparing them for a life that will often be very different from their parents'. Unfortunately, for many in the Himalaya, an education is also out of reach.



students' languages — whether it be Loba, Tibetan, Sherpa — as well as Nepali and English.

Government education systems are well-intentioned, but full of cracks; if you are from a low-caste community, a poor or broken family, or a girl, you might fall through. By educating these vulnerable children, AHF provides hope and opportunity to the students who need it most. We support hostels in Mustang and for Tibetans in exile so that parents in remote areas can send their kids to a good school that honors their culture and traditions. We provide special training for teachers so that they can instruct not only at a high level, but in their

From day care through college, we get kids in school who otherwise wouldn't be there, and help fill in the gaps so that each student has the best chance to succeed. This year, when disaster struck on Everest and 28 Sherpa children lost their fathers — and any hope of an education — in an avalanche, we raised enough to send a group of them through grade 12. And we cover the basics too — books for a Tibetan library, school supplies for street children, healthy meals for disabled students — because we know what a difference these things can make in the lives of struggling first-generation students and their families.

# EDUCATION

The best way, effective way, to keep one's tradition is through modern education.

— His Holiness the Dalai Lama



**80 4 80:** To honor His Holiness' 80th birthday in 2015, we are working to send 80 Tibetan students from refugee settlements to college. \$475 a year helps a student earn an undergraduate degree and change their family's fate.





Revitalizing culture  
and communities

# MUSTANG



When first-time visitors crest the ridge to Lo Montang, the walled capital of Upper Mustang, the sweeping plains and barren hills offer little evidence that much has changed since the 15th century. But, once part of a great trade route, Mustang had gradually become isolated. It existed as a Tibetan time capsule, until 1991 when the doors to the Forbidden Kingdom were flung open to outsiders, and the modern world.

AHF's work started with the soul of Mustang: the neglected temples. And what started with strengthening traditional touchstones — restoring key temples, reenergizing the monasteries and repairing the capital's iconic city wall — has since blossomed into one of our most important, most encompassing endeavors. With our partners there, we've trained teachers, health workers, and restoration artists; added bridges and day-care centers; and worked for two decades to help the people of Lo stay connected to their history as they step into the future.



*Youth groups* are doing irrigation projects that double crop yields and earn them respect in their villages.

*By the numbers:* 14 day care centers, 8 health posts, 8 Tibetan language and culture teachers, 4 monastic schools and 6 village youth groups.

*Cultural revival,* one brush stroke at a time.



Buddhism flows through the Himalaya, a giant hidden river that permeates and nourishes all aspects of Tibetan, Loba and Sherpa life. Spend time there and you can see the signs — in people’s hearts, homes and in the holy spaces they frequent. Buddhist practice and thought

ground them in the present, connect them to centuries of their past and provide strength and identity as they move into the future.

AHF supports monasteries, nunneries and temples

from Mustang to Tibet, from the Khumbu to Kathmandu, because these sustain communities from the soul up, in a way that other, more corporeal forms of aid do not. When we provide books and teachers in a remote monastic school or food for the nuns in Tibet so they don’t have to beg to survive, we are not just keeping bodies and minds healthy, we are keeping ancient traditions alive.

By restoring the ancient gompas in Mustang over the past two decades, we have done more than save and preserve priceless art. We have helped the Loba people recon-

nect with their culture and history. Tsang Jigme Gurung (aka Jojo) has been part of the local crew that transformed Thubchen and the other gompas; he explains it like

## KEEPING THE FAITH

this: “I am very proud that I have been able to help restore our ancient monasteries. I believe the work we are doing is changing the way all of us in Upper Mustang think about our culture. The paintings were worshipped by our ancestors, so to be able to restore them for my children and future generations, I feel blessed. We have given an eye to something that was blind and a hand to something that was handleless.”

A spiritual lifeline, connection to traditions and solace for the soul



*35 young monks study dharma, thanka painting — and play volleyball! — at Charang Monastic School in Mustang.*

# INSIDE TIBET

Helping Tibetans survive a dark period in their history



*Putting in a clean water system frees women and girls from the burden of spending their days hauling water from far rivers. Disease rates drop and girls can use their time to go to school.*



Life on the Tibetan plateau is harsh. Winter comes strong and early, and rivers rage high in the spring. Despite the rivers, clean water is scarce, as is medical care and opportunity. Most nomads live in wrenching poverty, struggling to survive and maintain their traditional way of life against overwhelming odds.

Here, what matters most? **Building basic**

**infrastructure where there is none, to make life less dangerous:** 37 bridges over swollen rivers so nomads can safely move the yak herds they depend on and 20 pipe systems that bring pure water into villages.

**Improving Health:** Tying sanitation and health education to the installation of water systems. Training midwives, because pregnant women receive tragically little



care. Building and supporting clinics for Tibetan and western medicine.

**Offering Care:** Shelter and food for elders, who have no one and nothing, and for nuns so they can study the dharma instead of begging.

**How do we do it?** Quietly, and with wonderful partners, who put their life on the line to do good work, not because it's a job, but because they care so deeply. They give everything they have to help, and it is humbling to be involved with them and to see the what they do in the field. Our common goal: as best we can, to make life better for people who have so very little.







For people at the margins — children who are orphaned, homeless, or with needs beyond their family’s abilities, or Tibetan elders who are destitute at the end of a life of adversity — caring means very basic things. But those basics — food, shelter, and, most importantly, loving hands — can save a life from misery and despair.



loved ones in the diaspora or, if they stayed in Tibet, in the cultural revolution or the famines. Whatever

their path, it was marked by hardship and they have come to their twilight years alone, frail and penniless. What matters most to them? Shelter and the warmth of being with others like themselves. Enough to eat and a place to drink tea and spin their prayer wheels in the sun. Their gratitude for these simple things is profound, and touching.

People sometimes ask if our projects are sustainable. They are; in caring for the most vulnerable we sustain life and dignity and hope.

# WE CARE

Taking care of the most vulnerable is at the heart of what we do.



At a shelter for street children in Kathmandu, girls find a safe place to stay, house mothers who care about them

and, when they’re ready, a chance to go to school. At a kindergarten in Tibet, blind children, orphaned or abandoned, live happily together and learn how to function in the world. And at Ngoenga, a home for Tibetan children with challenging special needs, the staff watches over their young charges with such care and dedication that the house is a happy, joyful place.

The Tibetan elders we care for may have been guerrilla fighters for the Tibetan cause or refugees who fled Tibet after the occupation, only to work on Indian roads for a rupee a day. They could have lost their



## The Rapper of Ngoenga

Twenty-year-old Tenzin Khedup is from a Tibetan settlement in India. Although he has cerebral palsy and is wheelchair-bound, Tenzin has an infectious laugh and sings like an angel, breaking out, from time to time, into an awesome Tibetan rap during the school’s performances. He also loves pizza. Ngoenga is the only place where any of this could be possible for him.



# COMMITMENT



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



*Richard Blum with Jamling and Norbu Tenzing in front of the statue of their father.*

*Dear friends,*

*I was deeply honored at being invited to the Khumbu this fall for the unveiling of the statue of Tenzing Norgay. The 15 foot bronze statue that now graces the hill at the top of Namche Bazaar stands right below Everest, a fitting place for the man who climbed it first, alongside Sir Edmund Hillary. On that perfect sunny morning, to see the statue among such a gathering of Sherpas, and hear Tenzing's sons, Norbu and Jamling, speak of their father's accomplishments was very moving. As I listened, I reflected on how both of them had honored their father by dedicating their careers to helping their fellow Sherpas and people all over the Himalaya.*

*From Everest to Mustang, from Tibet to the Terai, we work hard to make life easier and more hopeful for people across the Himalaya. We are incredibly grateful to all of you who are our partners and support; without you, this work would be impossible. Please, stay with us. Let's help more Tibetan students stay in school; let's heal more disabled children; let's keep another thousand girls from being trafficked.*

*Thank you,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dick', written in a cursive style.

Richard C. Blum  
Chairman

*Whether one believes in a religion or not, there isn't anyone who doesn't appreciate kindness and compassion.*

– His Holiness the Dalai Lama

*Save a life, change a life.* Please be generous!

**\$70** A goat provides milk, fiber, and baby goats to sell at market. Four legs up out of poverty for a woman in Nepal. A Baaaa-gain!

**\$100** Saves a girl from being sold and keeps her in school for a year. **\$1,000** pays for her entire education.

**\$108** Brings light to the sunset years of a Tibetan elder with food, warm clothes, tea, butter lamps.

**\$175** Life-changing surgery so a disabled child can take their first steps to a brighter future.

**\$230** Gives our Ngoenga Rapper a year of sustenance at the home for Tibetan Children with Special Needs.

**\$320** Brings clean water to a family in rural Tibet — so the girls can spend less time carrying water and more studying.

**\$360** Keeps the faith alive for a year for a young monastic studying dharma. (\$30/monthly) Think of the merit!

**\$475** Honor His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday this year by sending a Tibetan refugee student to college: \$1,425 goes all the way to graduation.

**\$500** Chai ho! Families in a remote Tibetan settlement in Assam are struggling to start tea farming. Match their investment so they can become self-sufficient.



*Tiger, tiger burning bright.  
Protect them. Fight poaching in  
the forests and the courts.*

PHOTOS: LUIGI FIENI, BRUCE MOORE, MATTHIEU RICARD, TSEDO, ERICA STONE, NORBU TENZING, KONCHOK PALMO, VASSI KOUTSAFTIS ARCLIGHT-PICTURES.COM, BRIAN WEIRUM, AND COURTESY OF OUR PARTNERS DESIGN: STUDIOA2



*“Even though I am free, unlike my late father, I feel at times like I am still a Kamaya — it is only the fact that I am able to go to school, and do well there, that gives me hope for a better future.”*  
— Khadhak KC, a former Kamaya slave



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