



AMERICAN HIMALAYAN FOUNDATION | What matters most







What matters most? That we take care of people in the Himalaya who are in need and have no one else. We do it by building trust and partnerships and communities. By helping people build for the future and still honor their heritage. By opening doors to education and health care. By caring for the most vulnerable, and by working with heart.

Cover photo by Jimmy Chin: Cloud formations above Lhotse, taken mid-afternoon from Camp 2 around 21,000 ft. "We watched these clouds arcing over Lhotse for days while we waited for the jet stream to move north and provide a summit window."

Saving girls

Sunita is 12 years old, in grade 7. Her mother died when she was six and her father is alcoholic and not entirely stable. He ekes out a living as a blacksmith making sickles for 100 rupees or sharpening them for 10. Sunita takes care of him. They have no land, and they have debt. She has two sisters, neither educated, both married off and far away. She likes environmental education, says it is important to know. She lives in an area notorious for trafficking.

She could easily have been a victim — shipped off to Mumbai or Dubai, a sex slave or a household slave, or both — her young life truncated, filled with abuse and despair. Instead, Sunita is one of 10,500 Nepali girls who, because of Stop Girl Trafficking, go to school.

Putting at-risk girls in school to keep them from being trafficked is the foundation of Stop Girl Trafficking. The brilliance of our partner Dr. Aruna Uprety and her organization, RHEST, is in the how: the care they take to find the girls most at risk and then weave a protective web around them — with community involvement, personal contact and dedication.

SGT is in 519 schools across Nepal, and RHEST's network of field staff visit all of them at least three times a year. They bring in the schools and the community from the beginning: teachers, school management committees, local social welfare groups, and SGT alumnae all mobilize to identify and select the girls most in danger and take part in the counseling and discussions that happen with the girls and their parents at each visit. The field staff keep in contact with them, as well as the girls and their parents, all year.

With all these eyes, the girls are no longer invisible. They are encouraged by it to try their best in school. And this happens with 10,500 girls in 519 schools — amazing enough — and for \$100 a year per girl.

10,500 girls
in school.
Prevention is
rescue without
the suffering.



Top and far left: Growing up with nothing — poverty and low status put girls at high risk.

Close left: Off to school, first girl in her family ever to go.



Healthcare

A boy born into a struggling family in a remote corner of Nepal has faulty knee joints and cannot walk. His parents are devastated — their child is disabled and the local health post cannot help. They finally hear about a mobile camp that will be stopping in the next village — put on by Dr. Banskota and his team from the Hospital and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children. Trembling, but hopeful, they bring their child, and the doctors examine him before referring him to HRDC's hospital near Kathmandu for surgery. When their son arrives, he joins some of the 5,000 other poor kids who have their bodies and minds healed by a combination of expert orthopedic surgery, physical therapy and tender care each year at HRDC. And when he's finished healing, he will walk — or even run — out of the hospital and into a healthy, productive new life.

A mother in rural Nepal needs medical help but the topic is taboo and she's a lower priority than the livestock. She suffers silently for a decade until she hears about a free women's health clinic. Within the month she's seeing a doctor — for the first time in her life — and her health and dignity are finally restored.

An elderly man in Upper Mustang comes down with a terrible cough. He needs treatment and likely a TB test, but it's winter, too cold to make the two-day horseback trip to the nearest hospital. He's getting worse, but he can get to one of the four AHF-backed health posts that provide a year-round safety net for the isolated villages of Lo.

For these people and 140,000 other Tibetans and Nepalis desperately in need of medical attention each year, we can be the difference between infirmity and care, between death and life.

We fund hospitals, train doctors, and stock clinics to mend children and ease suffering.



Left: Special shoes so little feet can grow straight — traded for dancing shoes later.





We are proud to have been Dr. B's partner in HRDC's transformative work for over two decades.



Education

ཤེས་ལོན་མེད་པའི་སྦུ་གུ་ནི་གཤོག་མེད་བྱ་དང་འདྲ།

“A child without education is like a bird without wings” -*Tibetan Proverb*

Tibetan children born into the “temporary” refugee settlements of Nepal and India may never see Tibet firsthand. They survive as outsiders, stateless, keeping their culture alive as best they can. Education is their best, perhaps only, way to take their place in the 21st century, but it’s crucial that the next chapter in the Tibetan saga still be written in Tibetan. To help, we fill in the gaps between the camps and college so that refugee children can have the opportunities offered by a modern education without losing the history and traditions of their homeland.

It starts with the smallest kids in the camps — like the day care students at the Dhargyelling Settlement, who we provide with caring teachers and that all-important lunch to go along with their ABCs and Tibetan songs. They may go on to a local Tibetan school next. We support those too — but if there isn’t one close by, they can go to school in a larger settlement and stay at the school hostel. Most families are so committed to their children’s education that they are willing to send them away to study, especially to a Tibetan school, and we make sure their young ones are in good hands once they arrive.

The hostels are homes-away-from-home, cultural oases that allow Tibetan students from all across Nepal to live, play, and study together. By the time tomorrow’s Tibetan leaders graduate from a school like Namgyal Tibetan High in Kathmandu, they’ve experienced 10+ years of quality education in Tibetan, English and Nepali, and are eligible for one of our college funds — all without sacrificing their past for their future.

Books, teachers,
uniforms —
whatever is most
needed to keep kids
in school, studying
and smiling.



\$310 pays for a whole year of college tuition and books for a Tibetan student. Deal!



36	72	63	30	48	41	7	70	54	
6 =	8 =	9 =	10 =	6 =	9 =	8 =	9 =	10 =	6 =

54	32	56	80	48
6 =	8 =	7 =	10 =	8 =

Two are better than
one, because
they have a good
reward for their labor.
For if they fall, the one
will lift up
his fellow, but one to
whom that is absent
hath not
another to help him up,
and if one
fall, he will
drag the other down
with him.





MUSTANG



The Kingdom of Mustang, fabled, forbidden, forgotten. Isolated by a closed border with Tibet to the north, and the Annapurna Himalayas to the south, overlooked by a distant government in Kathmandu and most development agencies, the people of Lo have access to little outside help. Which is where we come in. Thirty years ago, AHF started changing their lives with small gifts for a clinic in the walled city of Lo Manthang. Now AHF partners are present in every village, with projects ranging from large-scale gompa restoration to small village schools.



Fifteen day care centers, six health posts, seven schools, four monastic institutions, and a wide variety of village improvements – all because we have not forgotten, and because you never stopped caring.

Inside Tibet

The Tibetan plateau is a place of myth and legend, but for the nomads that call it home it's a very real — and increasingly difficult — place to live. Pollution threatens water sources, and climate change and development are shrinking the grazeable land for yaks. An influx of outsiders has marginalized the nomads and hastened the spread of AIDS and hepatitis.

To the small, isolated and impoverished communities on the plateau, these new challenges can seem impossible to overcome. How do we help? By building connections: each bridge we build over a swollen river helps thousands of nomads safely move their herds and connects them to clinics and schools. Each new clinic we build or stock with traditional and western medicines brings health care to an area where an untreated cough or cut could otherwise turn fatal and helps drop high maternal mortality rates. Each school we build or support opens a window to the world for classrooms full of Tibetan children. Each pipe water system we connect from a natural spring to a village brings families safe drinking water, increases crop yields and frees girls — the traditional water carriers — to go to school.

Our local Tibetan partners build on these connections for more leverage. If we fund a water system, they get the community involved in the construction and give a hygiene talk when everyone gathers. If we build a school, they fund the running costs for it and vice versa.

With all of the need inside Tibet, and the uncertainty and strife, we feel compelled to fortify the Tibetan way of life. And yes, every nun we help in her studies keeps a piece of the Tibetan spirit alive.

Left: Water is life. Bringing clean water to a village brings with it better health and freedom from having to carry the water long distances.

Building connections:
34 bridges, 18 water
systems, 18 schools
and 10 clinics for
over 100,000
Tibetans





Have faith

For Tibetans, Lobas and Sherpas, Buddhist faith is so closely entwined with their daily lives that it anchors their cultural identity, and is essential to their cultural survival.

It's why, almost 20 years ago, the king of Mustang asked us to restore the gompas and the monastic school — first. He knew, and we learned, that reconnecting the Lobas, the people of Mustang, with their Buddhist traditions was the key to reviving both culture and community. The results have been dramatic. Rites and festivals not performed for a century have returned, and Lobas are proud to point out that there are now enough monks for every house to receive an annual blessing and every marriage to be sanctified. That pride goes farther too — to a realization that their way of life is unique, precious, and worth holding on to.

Inside Tibet, the monks and nuns we help are a spiritual lifeline for Tibetans who are besieged by crackdowns and religious oppression. The soul of Tibet is inseparable from Buddhist devotion, and monasteries and nunneries are more than places of learning and worship, they are symbols of the perseverance of the Tibetan spirit and beacons of hope in troubled times.

In Nepal, nunneries like Kunsang Choling and Keydong connect Tibetan refugees to their history and to each other. They are touchstones for the community, and sometimes safe havens for girls newly arrived from Tibet or rescued from neglect in some far corner of the country. To support them is to keep the faith and a vote for compassion in the furnace of the world.

“Tibetan Buddhist sangha provide spiritual strength and power. They are the doctors of the soul.”

– Luigi Fieni,
Mustang Conservator



“We need monks and nuns for spiritual and physical healing. They try to bring about peace throughout the world through prayer and meditation and by doing this create a sense of calmness — especially among the stateless Tibetan people.”
–Dawa



Caring — yes!

Some people need a lifeline, a way to survive and to live with dignity and hope.

We take care of Tibetan elders, some in Tibet, some in the refugee camps of Nepal and India. These lovely elders have lived through so much, and lost so much, that they have come into the twilight of their lives penniless and alone — exquisitely vulnerable. Tea money is a blessing, help for food and medicines makes all the difference. For those who were homeless, we offer shelter, simple comforts, and the chance to be with others, sitting companionably in the afternoon sun and spinning their prayer wheels or reading prayers.

Young ones who are orphaned or abandoned, or beyond the capabilities of their already struggling parents, need care and support too. At Navjyoti, a day school in Kathmandu, 96 special needs children learn and develop as far as they can, supported by staff who teach them everything from basic life skills to — dance! Very popular, the dancing. And joyous. In Ngoenga, the only boarding school for Tibetan children with disabilities, the staff treat the kids like their own, tenderly taking care of them, helping them cope with their daily lives, teaching reading and math to the ones who can handle it. Everyone here gets dance lessons too!

All these people, young or old, have had lives of struggle and hardship, and yet just a little time of sitting with them can open your heart and make you remember how connected we all are.

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



Top: His Holiness gave Ngoenga its name: it translates to very happy. And that's how the extraordinary staff makes the kids feel.

Left: Dancing at Navjyoti, good for the body and soul.



Commitment

Dear Friends,

Talking with the Everest legends at our annual dinner this year, I was reminded once again of the responsibility travelers have after they return from a place as magical and life-changing as the Himalaya — to give back, to turn around and help the people who live there.

For a poor family in Nepal or Tibet, even the simplest things can make a huge difference: clean water, or a pair of goats, or a backpack-shaped promise of safety for their daughters.

Musing over the last three decades, what I'm most proud about isn't just the number of people we've been able to help — 350,000 this year — it's the quality and consistency of the help we deliver to each of them. Some of the elders we support with food and shelter I've been visiting for ten years. Young Tibetan refugees we helped when they first made it to safety in Nepal now have children of their own. Girls who were the pioneers in the first classes of Stop Girl Trafficking have graduated and are mentors to a new generation.

We created AHF to be a foundation: to help Sherpas, Tibetans and Nepalis build better, brighter futures. It takes commitment, and heart, and you. Please make AHF part of your giving. Every gift lifts the spirits of someone in need — and I promise it will do the same for you.

Best personal regards,



Richard C. Blum
Chairman



Health

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



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

Caring

\$50 offers a Tibetan elder tea, rice and warm clothes for the winter.

STOP Girl Trafficking

\$100 saves a girl from being sold by keeping her in school for a year.



Dharma

\$65 lets a nun in Tibet study all year — so she can keep the faith



Livelihood

\$140 for a pair of goats that sets a rural Nepali woman on a path to financial freedom.



Mustang

\$30 brings joy to the children in a day care with Tibetan-themed coloring books.



Love tigers, hate poachers?

\$80 protects a tiger with antipoaching patrols



Clean water

\$200 can change a Tibetan family's life for the better.
\$22,000 takes the village.





AMERICAN HIMALAYAN FOUNDATION

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“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”
—His Holiness, the Dalai Lama

