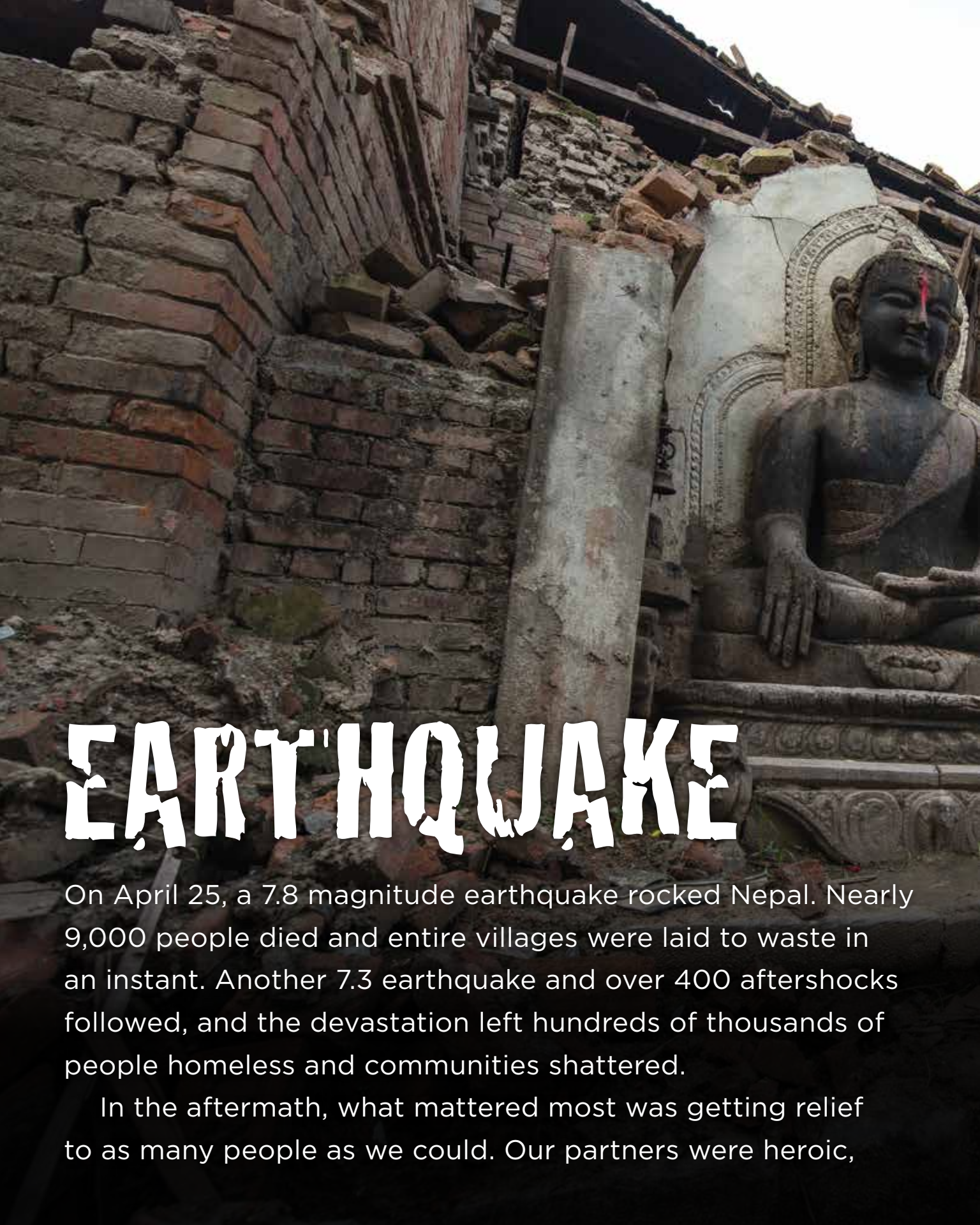




AMERICAN HIMALAYAN FOUNDATION | *The road to recovery*





EARTHQUAKE

On April 25, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake rocked Nepal. Nearly 9,000 people died and entire villages were laid to waste in an instant. Another 7.3 earthquake and over 400 aftershocks followed, and the devastation left hundreds of thousands of people homeless and communities shattered.

In the aftermath, what mattered most was getting relief to as many people as we could. Our partners were heroic,



mobilizing to bring food, clothing, medical help and comfort to thousands of earthquake victims.

Now we're rebuilding. The road to recovery will be long, and sometimes bumpy. People in Nepal have suffered so much, and had their resilience so tested. But we are committed to rebuilding schools, hospitals, monasteries, livelihoods — and lives.

Saving girls

Nepal's central hills were ground zero for the earthquake, and the place where trafficking has long been entrenched. Predators have been quick to take advantage of the chaos, posing as job brokers or orphanage workers to lure away girls and sell them into slavery. How can this happen? For families crushed by poverty, in a culture that doesn't value women, girls are expendable. The earthquake opened many new cracks for them to fall through.

EVERY GIRL SAVED IS A VICTORY.

Dr. Aruna Uprety, our visionary partner in STOP Girl Trafficking, wanted to prevent the tragedy of girls being sold and had a far-reaching idea — you can keep a girl safe by educating her. How does it work? Search out the girls most at risk and put them through school. Pay their school fees, give them backpacks, school supplies, mentors. And, as part of their safety net, involve the whole community, so that teachers, parents, and other SGT students all get invested in keeping girls in school.

The longer a girl stays in school, the more she learns and the more confident she becomes. She is seen as an asset to her family and a role model for other girls. Parents have wept with pride at their daughter's graduation, a child they had considered of little worth.

SGT had 11,000 girls in school — before the earthquake. Within days of the disaster, Dr. Uprety and her organization, RHEST, transformed their network into emergency relief teams and delivered rice, tarps and hygiene kits to thousands of girls and their communities. And, because

every day outside is a day at risk, we helped build 54 durable temporary classrooms where schools had collapsed, and added 3,800 newly vulnerable girls from the hardest-hit districts to SGT.

Now SGT has 14,800 girls in school. It's a big jump for us, but it prevents another 3,800 terrible fates.

14,800 girls
in school.
Prevention is
rescue without
the suffering.



The big blue SGT bags are normally filled with school supplies, but after the quakes, Aruna, pictured near left, and her team filled them with relief essentials and got them out to thousands of girls and their families. Far left: temporary classrooms, but lots of learning and good spirits.



Health in a time of crisis

Dr. Ashok and Bibek Banskota, his son, and their hardworking team at the Hospital and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children never cease to impress us, but this year their expertise and resolve were tested as never before.

They mobilized the day after the earthquake, setting up emergency health camps in nine districts and opening the hospital doors to anyone, children and adults, who needed help — 24/7, for free. In the camps, they performed life-saving surgeries in tents, or outside, and provided everything from trauma care and mental health counselling to food, blankets, clothing, and 30,000 dignity kits filled with hygiene essentials to people who had lost everything. The camps, 98 in all, ended up offering relief and medical services to nearly 45,000 people.

Totally inspiring, but not surprising. Dr. Banskota's utter dedication to healing is what led AHF to take a bet on him back in 1988. From our first meeting, our partnership grew. We followed him to a temporary children's hospital he set up in a converted house, where the prosthetics were skillfully fashioned in the garage from PVC pipes. A few years later, in his quest to help more of Nepal's most disadvantaged children, we helped him build "a real hospital", the present HRDC. Since then, we have helped nurture it as it grew into the best pediatric orthopedic hospital in Nepal — with a network that reaches the poorest disabled children all over the country and trains more good doctors to carry on the work.

Over 66,000 mended children later, this partnership was a good bet. And now, as we finish repairs to cracked walls and broken pipes, and the young patients are being treated inside the hospital again, HRDC is back to doing what they are so impeccably good at — saving disabled children from a lifetime of suffering. And they do it all with compassion, patience, and a skilled hand.

From the hospital to the field, the HRDC team are heroes to the thousands of children mended by their care.



What it takes: healing hands, huge hearts, and determination in the face of obstacles, like navigating Nepal's uncompromising terrain on damaged roads and having to pause surgeries during intense aftershocks.



98 emergency camps, reaching 45,000 patients. Whether at a camp or in the hospital, Dr. Banskota, above, and his team are dedicated to healing.



Restoring the faith

Compassion and an open heart are central tenets of Buddhism, and the monastic community drew deeply on their practice after the earthquake, digging survivors out of the rubble, clearing roads, offering shelter to newly homeless families, and distributing food. They held prayers for the victims and did what they could to alleviate suffering, despite their own hardships.

Many of them had lost their homes too. From Kathmandu to the Khumbu to Mustang, the earthquakes damaged or demolished monasteries and nunneries — prayer halls, living quarters, and classrooms. The nuns of Bigu and Bakhang in the remote hills by the Tibet border lost everything when landslides destroyed their nunneries. They journeyed to Kathmandu however they could, often walking for days, where AHF is providing food and solar lights to ease their stay in transitional shelters until they can return and rebuild. At Charang Monastic School, the monks slept, ate and studied in the few rooms that were left intact. At nunneries in Kathmandu, everyone slept and lived outside under tarps.

Monks and nuns are well-versed in impermanence, but these monasteries and nunneries are more than just structures. They are centers of worship and learning that connect Tibetans, Lobas, and Sherpas to their heritage and daily life, and nourish the faith at the heart of Tibetan culture.

These essential havens for the Tibetan Buddhist community provide succor in times of need, in Tibet and in exile. That's why we're repairing five monasteries and the Keydong and Kunsang Choling nunneries, so that butter lamps, and faith, will continue to burn bright.



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

*– Luigi Fieni,
Mustang Conservator*



Top: Thame chorten was severely damaged, as were 95% of the homes in the Thame village.

Far left: Bigu nunnery was flattened and the nuns fled to Kathmandu for shelter. Left: Even little nuns appreciate lunch.



Tibetans in exile

Our support for education for Tibetans is broad and deep. Exile life can be bleak, and the resettlement camps scattered throughout India and Nepal offer limited opportunities.

From daycare on, we provide books, uniforms, support for teachers, food (important for growing kids!) so that students can focus on their studies, support to hostels so that young Tibetans from remote areas can keep attending school, and scholarships to bring college within reach — we have more than 200 college graduates, and counting. We meet with groups of them during our Nepal visits and they are bright and motivated, and grateful.

The earthquake severely damaged Atisha Primary School and the two best Tibetan public schools in Kathmandu, Namgyal High School and Namgyal Middle School. We repaired classrooms, dorms, a dining hall and library, and rented temporary tent classrooms so the students could keep studying. A good education that includes Tibetan language and cultural tradition makes these schools the hope and pride of the community.

At the Pokhara camps, minor earthquake damage did not dampen their characteristic compassion. Residents rented trucks and delivered food, clothing, and sleeping mats to hundreds of desperate Nepali families in seven villages several hours away.

But elsewhere, Tibetans faced major devastation and loss of life.

Up near the sensitive border area with Tibet, entire villages were wiped out by landslides. Many survivors are living in tents in Kathmandu; others have hunkered down in their fields in temporary tin shelters. They all want to return, but it's difficult without support. As refugees they cannot legally own land, and their homes for the last 54 years will be lost to encroachment if they cannot rebuild quickly. So we are helping them reestablish homes, and their lives.

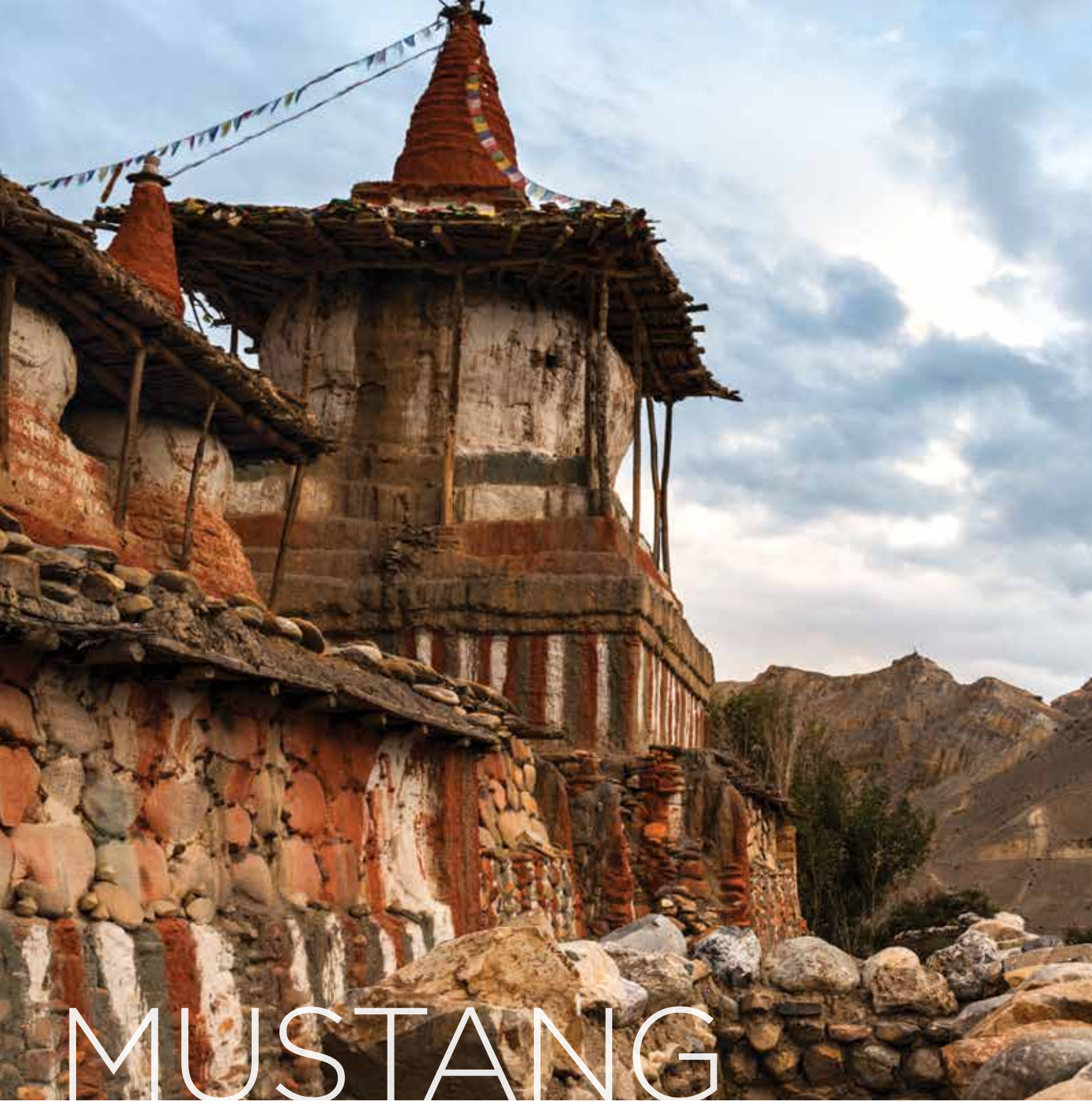
Helping Tibetan refugees build — and rebuild — for the future.



Far left: Standing in the ruins of a Syabru village.

Near left: Half classroom and half camping out while their school is repaired. But learning goes on, and even some fun.





Mustang, the ancient Kingdom of Lo, an enclave of Tibetan culture within Nepal, was shaken too. Monasteries were damaged, daycares tumbled, the Choser bridge collapsed. But this once-forbidden kingdom is very precious to us, and we are rebuilding daycares and the bridge, and repairing damage to the 15th century monasteries. We're thankful that the gompas that anchor Lobas to their spiritual roots can be restored — by local artisans and conservator Luigi Fieni.



For the future: Kids from all over Mustang stay at Jomsom hostel for middle and high school. For most, it's their only option, and they are grateful to be living and learning together, keeping in touch with their Loba roots.



Caring

The earthquakes pushed people who were caught in the devastation to the edge — they lost their homes, their loved ones, their livelihoods; they were injured, traumatized and bereft.

Helping all the people we take care of in Nepal recover from this disaster is a huge priority for us, but we are also committed to doing it without missing a beat on our ongoing pledges to take care of the most vulnerable. Disabled and abandoned children, elders — some people just need care.

Mentally or physically disabled children are often left alone because their parents don't know how to care for them. They need expert attention and a safe place in order to flourish, and Ngoenga School for Tibetan Children with Special Needs is that, with an astonishing staff filling the atmosphere with light. Not even the earthquake could quell the enthusiasm of our kids at Navjyoti School in Kathmandu — they're happily taking their math and dance lessons in a still-standing part of their school while we rebuild damaged classrooms.

Life is hard for exiles, but many aging Tibetan refugees are especially vulnerable, without income or family. Knowing when their next meal is coming, having a warm place and a community to socialize with: these things cost little but are priceless. We take care of Tibetan elders from Kathmandu to Pokhara and beyond, to camps in India, and inside Tibet (yes we still work there, quietly) so their golden years can have a little shine and dignity. Because taking care of the most vulnerable really is at the heart of what we do.

Taking care of
people in need who
have no one else.
This year more
than ever.



Tigers need help too — they're being poached into extinction. We are carrying the fight against poachers into the field and the courts, and funding education for villagers so they can appreciate the value of these magnificent creatures.

Left: An exuberant welcome from the students at Ngoenga.





From the ground up

Many Tibetans end up destitute and alone at the end of a hard life as a refugee. It's a heartbreak that led us, nearly two decades ago, to partner with the Tibetan Women's Welfare Group in Kathmandu who were looking after some of these struggling elders. Their dedication so inspired us that we helped them make a permanent home for 80 Tibetan elders, where they could share stories, drink tea, and spin their prayer wheels in warmth and safety.

It was a joyous place, and when we visited these delightful oldsters, they shared their gratitude in small, touching gestures — a packet of cookies, a khata, prayers. The Tibetan women are dream partners; they manage the home with love and care, and hold fundraisers in the community to raise half of the expenses.

Then, the earthquake, and chaos. Half the home was damaged beyond repair, and the elders had to crowd together, several to a room, in the half still standing. The Tibetan women's group, distressed by how difficult this was for their frail elders, began to look at whether they should rebuild on their current hilly site or find somewhere else. After careful assessment, they realized that selling the original site and relocating closer to Boudha would be better for the residents, and less expensive. It's a big task, but they are determined to make it work. And we're with them. Elder Tibetans who have no one need refuge, a place to call home.

We treasure our
long partnerships,
built from the
ground up.



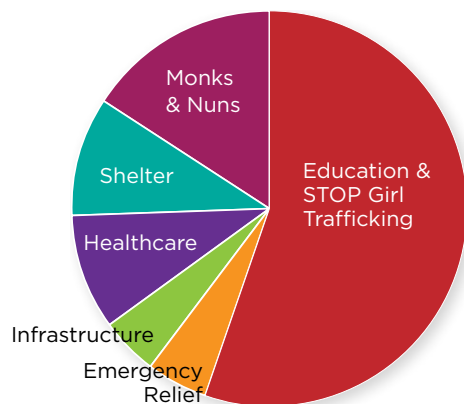
Left and below left: Little things bring dignity to the twilight years — a cup of tea, a warm meal, and time with friends.

Below right: The Tibetan Women's intrepid exec committee pile into a van in the hunt for a new home for their beloved elders.





Rebuilding Namche Dental Clinic Good dental care, once unknown in the Khumbu, is now part of the landscape thanks to this clinic — at 11,800' in Namche Bazaar. It has served the Sherpa community, and occasional climbers, for 24 years, and will again as soon as the building is finished and new equipment installed. For Nawang Doka, the clinic's long-time dental therapist, "The measure of the clinic's success comes in healthy and happy Sherpa smiles."



AHF's Nepal Earthquake Recovery Fund: The first 10 months

A million thanks to all of you who were so generous to the Earthquake Recovery Fund. Actually, \$2.5 million. We have committed and spent \$1.8 million, working hard to get the funds to where they were most needed, and quickly, but being careful they were well spent. This is when having dedicated, savvy, and effective partners is golden. And 100% of the funds — every dollar — went directly to relief and recovery. Thank you again, we're still working and there's much more to be done.

Commitment

Dear Friends,

It's been a challenging year.

We were in Nepal two days after the first earthquake and began working to bring emergency relief to as many people as we could. The early days, weeks, months, were chaotic and difficult. Our partners and our field staff were heroic, working through aftershocks, finding food and supplies and vehicles to take them over damaged roads to help more damaged villages. I cannot thank Bruce and Tsedo enough for their courage and perseverance.

What I saw in April was the resilience of the Nepalese and Tibetans in the face of disaster. We just returned from a second visit and I could still see it, and the rebuilding progress we have been able to make with our partners is very hopeful. But piled onto the quake destruction, the paralysis of government, the political unrest and the fuel crisis have stretched that resilience paper thin. It's a tough time for my favorite (other) country and yet, in some ways, after all this time — 46 years now — Nepal is more in my blood than it's ever been.

I hope you will stay with us on Nepal's road to recovery. We are committed. But we need your help to make it work for the 300,000 people who count on us, and you, this year as never before.

Best personal regards,



Richard C. Blum
Chairman

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Richard and the newly recognized Rinpoche in Thame.



Celebrating 80 in style with an Everest cake and 500 friends.

PHOTOS: RICHARD BLUM, LUIGI FIENI, DANIEL GAFF, BRUCE MOORE, MATTHIEU RICARD, TSEDO, NAWANG SHERAB, ERICA STONE, NORBU TENZING, BRIAN WEIRUM, YUMI WILSON, AND COURTESY OF OUR PARTNERS
DESIGN: ALLYSON APPEN, STUDIOA2

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

Will you help?

"It is only with AHF's help that we have been able to get this far, and we thank you from the core of our hearts. If it were not for AHF, our lives would now be in darkness."

— Lhokte Gurung, 19-year-old Jomsom hostel resident

Livelihood

\$70 Buys a goat for a family, giving them milk and income. It's a practical investment and a gift that keeps on giving.

STOP Girl Trafficking

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

Health

\$165 Transformative surgery for a disabled child turns suffering into smiles and a new lease on life.

Dharma

\$360 Keeps the faith alive (and supplied!) for a year for a young monastic student. At **\$30/month**, think of the merit!

Caring

\$45 A month of essentials for a lovely Tibetan elder: food, shelter, tea, and care. **\$540** offers comfort and dignity for the entire year.

Education and a Future

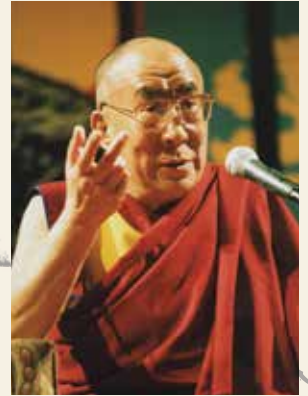
\$475 Gives a young Tibetan a year of college and a future beyond a resettlement camp. **\$1,425** pays for all three years.

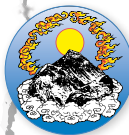
Mustang

\$108 A year of Tibetan language and culture classes — including traditional dance! — keeps a young Loba connected to their roots.

Still Recovering

We're still helping rebuild lives wrecked by this year's earthquakes. In a Tibetan village near the border where they have no help, **\$3,500** will rebuild a home and **\$5,000** will replace the community water system. Whether a door, window, or the entire house, every bit helps.





AMERICAN HIMALAYAN FOUNDATION

909 Montgomery Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, California 94133
(415) 288-7245
www.himalayan-foundation.org

"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."

— His Holiness the Dalai Lama

