



# STICHTING TIBET-FONDS "DOLMA"

Hendrick Vroomlaan 78  
4383 TN Vlissingen  
0118 47 42 53

[info@tibetfondsdolma.nl](mailto:info@tibetfondsdolma.nl)

[www.tibetfondsdolma.nl](http://www.tibetfondsdolma.nl)

NL41ABNA0465533280  
NL62INGB0000136838

Newsletter December 2015

Well, here is our newsletter, a little later than usual. I came back from my trip to India at the end of October, and this had not been my easiest trip to date. The conditions were more difficult than I was used to. I was happy to be back home, five kilos lighter and with a heavy cold that I had not been able to shake off in India. Fortunately here the living conditions are much easier, and I have now recovered and can tell you about my experiences.

I was welcomed with open arms in Mundgod, as has been the case on all of my previous visits. Over the years, the Dolma Foundation has become a well-known name, and many people knew where to find me. Some of them just wanted to see me and to thank me, but many also came with new requests for help. I visited people sponsored by us and the current projects. I also paid attention to the global developments that can be seen in the entire Tibetan community, and I would like to share my observations with you.

I want to begin with my findings concerning the large agricultural project and organic farming. I found some positive situations but also some struggling ones. I was very impressed with the agricultural activities of the Rato monastery. It is not only the farmers who are cultivating their land, but now the monks as well. The Rato monastery has planted an isolated piece of land with mango and cashew trees and inter-sown it with rice. In this way, good sources of revenue are being developed to provide the monastery with an income in the future. So the money we have donated to them has been very well spent. I am happy to convey their thanks to you. One problem remains. Only one pump is used to irrigate the plantation, but that has proved insufficient. The land is situated at an altitude that does not allow it to retain enough water for the healthy growth of the saplings. A second pump is needed, and the monastery has made a request for the boring of a second well and all related equipment. The cost for this has been estimated at € 4.700. We will try to contribute to this.

For the rest, the agricultural project is not doing too well. As everywhere else in the world, it is difficult to persuade younger Tibetans to see their future in agriculture. Many dream of a richer future in the west, and really do not choose the uncertain life of a farmer and all the hard work that goes with it. This is easy to understand, considering the dependence on the monsoon and the very small size of the agricultural plots – nothing is easy, but where is it easy? Many of them have planted mango trees etc. on their land. This requires little labour and after a few years they have a harvest. The older generation finds organic farming very complicated. This is an issue of concern to the Tibetan leaders.

The new water tank in camp 5 is working out well. Finally most people, to their delight, again have enough water on a daily basis. I have great pleasure in passing on the gratitude that the people expressed to me. Unfortunately the people who live a bit further away still do not have enough water, as the main pipes need renewing after 40 years. Roots of trees and shrubs force their way into the pipes, block them, and prevent the free flow of water. Maintenance is always a recurrent expenditure. Renewal of the main pipelines is estimated at €6.000. How great it would be if we could jointly see to it that everyone in camp 5 has water again!

Another problem presented itself during my visit to the old-age home when the electricity fell out. This happened regularly even in my own room and one power cut lasted two and a half days. This was not only inconvenient, but also meant that the food in the fridges and freezers was wasted and ended up as dog food. This also meant no more fans to cool down the old people. The solution would be a generator for an emergency supply of electricity. This would cost € 1.500, including a small supply of petrol. Will you join us in this?



The new deep freeze at the Central School works well, and is in good use. The new solar lamp lights up the dark and the leaking roof of the Drepung Loseling Monastery has been renewed. No more drips on the children's exercise books. Everyone is happy, and many thanks for this.

Education remains an important focus for our Foundation. The fight against poverty begins with good education. I received applications from four different locations for readers and textbooks. The total amount for this came to about € 1.650. This is of such overall value that we would like to save for this.



*Inspiring mottoes hang on many school walls*

We have also granted several bursaries to young people which will ensure them of a good professional education in the coming years. This increases the likelihood that they will stay in India and find work there. They will also serve as models for their fellow students, to show that you can get somewhere with hard work.

Of course we have not forgotten the full-time boarders. For several years now we have seen to it that these children still enjoy themselves during the cold winter period around the Tibetan New Year. They either have no parents, or cannot go home. The winter school organised for them gives them some happiness. We need at least € 1.200 for transport, accommodation, food and drink.

I admired the sports field that has been built on a central terrain. Hard work is being done to create more sports facilities, which are important for the younger people. Tibetans love football and young and old come to watch it with great pleasure. It even seems to have become a central meeting place for the whole community. The Doeguling Youth and Sports Association has been established, and they have asked us to finance the construction of a water tank with 6 taps. There is no water to be found anywhere near the area. This will cost € 1.760.

I visited several people in very sorry circumstances. There are still so many needy people in the world. I want to draw special attention to the following people:



Lobsang Tsultrim (42) was a monk but is now married and has two young children. His wife is lame. He has really struggled to master his carpentry skills. At the moment he has an extremely dusty



Chodar (76) has been a widower or 30 years. He lives alone in an extremely badly built and leaky little house, the worst I have seen there. He brought up 3



Tsering Dolma (32) lives in north-eastern Tibet. Her husband died in a motor accident. She has two children. She has very poor vision, and

workplace where he also lives with his family. Sponsoring them with € 30 per month would help to improve their difficult circumstances a little.

sons on his own, but hasn't seen them for years and they do not support him. Sponsoring him with € 20 per month would alleviate his situation.

needs an eye operation. She earns a little money by collecting medicinal herbs. A sponsorship of € 40 per month is of great help to her in the much more expensive China.

Once again, there were many requests for help with medical expenses. This will be a recurring issue. Without medical insurance people often have to take out heavy loans as a last resort. Our help, in the form of a contribution to a maximum of € 250 per patient, is very welcome. Our medicine 'kitty' is never full and is very useful.



A foot deformed by diabetes. I often see this kind of situation and we can help these people from our budget for medicines.



*Every house will shelter two families*



*The monastery and the mountains create the feeling of home.*

I ended my journey in Dharamsala. Staff members from the Home Department took me to Bir to have a look at the progress in the construction of a new village for the ex-prisoners from Tibet. I was impressed by how much work has been done, and is still being done. The roads are finished and quite a few houses have gone up. There will be 72 houses in total, and it is expected that the work will be finished by 1 July. This seems feasible to me, as the 80 builders at work there are cooperating well. We have paid for the building of 5 houses. We and another Dutch organisation are the only foreign donors. We can be proud of our contribution! There is still a considerable shortfall in the budget, and it would be nice if we could make an additional contribution so that the project can be finished on time and the future occupants can move in. Would we be able to donate another house?

And so my journey went, with ups and downs, with good developments and developments that cause some concern. I would like to share some of my observations with you.

Walking around a Tibetan settlement, you will immediately see how many people, especially the younger ones, have a smartphone. As in the rest of the world, it is by far the best means of communication. This is the case both within the camps, but also between the camps in India and Nepal, and also with Tibetans in other parts of the world. It is cheap, a good source of information, and you can also use it to send photos. They are also found everywhere in the monasteries. Initially there were attempts to forbid them, but this was like trying to hold back the tide. It is a trend that cannot be reversed. You may ask yourself, 'How can they afford this?' Well, as far as I could find out, they are often given by a family member or by a sponsor. They are also much cheaper in India than in the Netherlands. In the past, one had to rely on a telephone cabinet or an internet café, but these have now practically disappeared. The big advantage is ease of communication. Members of a family can follow each other through photos, which is great for parents and children who live far apart. But there is also a big down-side to this. The image that younger Tibetans get of the west is unfailingly positive: there are only success stories. This gives many of them only one aim – to go to a western country, get a job there and become rich.

Their level of education is relatively high, and very little suitable work can be found in the refugee camps, other than in the Tibetan government and education. It is only natural that a good education leads to a high ambition which is difficult to meet in a poor India. This also creates the desire of the younger generation to migrate to the west.

There is a big exodus to rich countries such as the USA, Australia, Malaya, Taiwan and Europe. Some of these countries even invite young Tibetans, so that there is an exodus from India of educated Tibetans. Many educated people who are badly needed to support the community are leaving for overseas.

There is a drastic decrease in the number of new refugees. This seems like a positive development, because who would want people to take big risks to leave Tibet? But this does not mean that people do not want to leave Tibet. The reason for this reduction in refugees is due to the fact that the borders of Tibet have been tightly sealed since the Tibetan protests against the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008. The result is that the inflow of refugees has decreased considerably and the group between 20 and 50 years of age is getting smaller and smaller. This is another issue: there are fewer and fewer people in the prime of their lives to support the community. The birth rate has also decreased considerably. Couples have fewer children as a result of a better standard of living and better contraceptives, and there are fewer young couples adding to the population because they have moved overseas. This has short-term effects on the provision of schooling, and the long-term effect of the aging of the population.

After 50 years of work and progress, it is clear that welfare has increased. This is thanks to your continuing donations and the donations of many like you all over the world. People have a better standard of living, all children can go to school, there is water, sanitation, agricultural opportunity etc. That is what we have all worked for.

50 years ago, people had very similar living conditions, but we are now beginning to see disparities. One can see more wealth in the camps, more cars, and lovely new houses that contrast sharply with the earlier housing. Quite a lot of money is coming in from family members overseas, from Tibetan soldiers pensioned from the Indian Army and from successful businessmen. There is a gap between the rich and the poor. This is a big change in the Tibetan community.



*The little ones sing without a care in the world.*

But there is still a large group of people who find it difficult to make ends meet. These groups are being left behind, such as the elderly, those in bad health, the unemployed, small-scale farmers etc. These people still badly need our help. Inflation is high in India, about 7% per annum. The exchange rate with the Euro is also under pressure, nearly -7% in the last year. The result is that sponsored money is decreasing in value and that people can buy much less with the € 20 or € 25 per month than a year ago. We should actually be increasing the amount of sponsored money by 10-20% to keep up purchasing power. Would you give this some thought?

Many people are now on the move, looking for a better and safer future. Younger Tibetans think they will get more opportunities in the west to improve their lives, and see Europe and America as places where money grows on trees. Some of them succeed, but many of them struggle and are lonelier than before. I am sure that members of the Tibetan government also look at this development with concern and are doing their best to look for solutions to this problem. But it is clear that there is still a great need for help.

On behalf of the Tibetans, I would like to thank you for all the donations that you continue to make. This helps them to feel that they are supported in their difficult lives, and you have helped many of them by making their lives a little easier.

I would like to end this newsletter with this special logo. It was designed by the Doeguling Youth and Sports Association; the dove of peace that flies forth for all. This is a lovely, creative design. Fortunately there are still many younger people who want to help the Tibetan community, and they engage in activities to that end.



I hope that you too, have faith in the message of this dove of peace, and wish you a happy new year.  
Tashi Delek!

སྐལ་བཟང་། བཀའ་པ་

Franz de Reeper