


# HIMALAYAN COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Welcome to the eleventh edition of our Himalayan Community Projects newsletter.

After the difficulties of the last two years, we hope this newsletter will bring positive vibes into an uncertain world. Throughout the pandemic we have continued our work in the Himalaya helping our local staff and people in remote communities.

**EXODUS  
TRAVELS**   
*Foundation*

Find out more at:  
[www.exodus.co.uk/foundation](http://www.exodus.co.uk/foundation)



## A WORD FROM VALERIE

As well as the Himalaya, the Exodus Travels Foundation supports initiatives all around the world, but it cannot exist without travellers who care.

Travel and tourism is one of the biggest industries on the planet, and is responsible for the employment of 1 in 10 people globally. That's a huge opportunity to use a worldwide network to promote positive change. Using the connections and long-standing relationships Exodus has built and maintained over the last 45 years, the Exodus Travels Foundation is able to get off the beaten track and help communities that large aid organisations can't reach.

At the heart of everything are the three guiding principles: empowerment, education and environmental protection, and each cause or project the foundation supports are linked to at least one of these goals. Whether it's supporting a local community project or working with travellers to ensure their impact is always a

positive one, the foundation is focussed on using travel as a force for good.

Since my last Himalayan Community Support newsletter much of the world has changed due to the pandemic. In March 2020 tourism came to a halt and as I write this at the start of 2022, there has been very little travel for almost two years. In the Himalaya our partners and staff have seen their work disappear – they have had no government help and have needed our help more than ever.

We are so grateful to our friends and clients who have continued to support our projects despite hard times. On the following pages you can read more about these projects. Some have been on hold since March 2020 but others we have still managed to support during the pandemic, and we hope in 2022 that we will be able to continue our support to these projects that are close to our hearts.

## OUR SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL ETHOS

We have always believed in three simple guiding principles for the way in which we want to travel:

- 1 We should ensure that communities benefit from our visit
- 2 We realise that every destination is someone else's home
- 3 We should leave places as we would like to find them

FOR DETAILS OF  
OUR APPROACH VISIT:

[www.exodus.co.uk/sustainable-travel](http://www.exodus.co.uk/sustainable-travel)





! BUY A BAG FOR £25 AND CHANGE A LIFE!

## FREEDOM KIT BAGS

*Give Nepalese women a better life – period!*

Exodus have been working with Freedom kit bags since 2017 and since then we have donated over £54,000 (and over 2,000 Freedom kit bags) to help women in Nepal have a better life.

Freedom kit bags are eco-friendly, sustainable, hygienic sanitary wear and 'kit' in a bag, that release women and girls from the cultural and physical constraints of menstruation and enhances their health. It gives liberty of movement and allows uninterrupted education and offers empowerment. A small medical research project has shown that Freedom kit bags improve the health and well-being of the women. It also helps the woman to fulfil her family role more easily and enables her to be involved within her community.

When Nepalese women have their period, they are called 'chhaupadi', which translates to 'untouchable being'. Alongside this, Nepalese women must deal with the stigma that is still associated with menstruation plus there are many problems that come from being without proper sanitary protection. Not only are women vulnerable to chronic vaginal infections that can lead to pelvic inflammation and infertility, which is a growing problem in Nepal, but because of 'chhaupadi' women and girls also suffer from low self-image and lack of dignity. Lack of sanitary management of menstruation holds women and girls back from opportunities and the ability to play a fuller role in their world. If you improve the life of a woman – you help the family and therefore improve the life of the community.

A Freedom kit bag includes washable pads for daily and night-time use, pad-holders, panties, a pretty carrying purse, a waterproof bag for used pads, soap and its bag, a washing line and pegs, and a colourful holder-bag to keep it all safely in. Everything is attractive to help empower the women. With care they can last up to 3 years. The

### FREEDOM KIT BAGS

Release women and girls from the cultural and physical constraints of menstruation enhances their health – gives liberty of movement – allows uninterrupted education – offers empowerment.

Buy a bag for £25 and change a life.



### ANGELS CHILDREN'S HOME Nepal

Angel's is a children's home in Patan, Nepal. It is home to 21 children. Dr Rosa and Dr Ian Matheson were the founders of Friends of Angel's in 2009. Working with many friends and supporters in the UK (including Brian Mildenhall, a regular Exodus client and now a trustee of the Friends), they raise the money to pay for the food, house rent and education of the children. Throughout the pandemic we have supported the children. We fund £400 twice a year which paid for food in the early lockdowns and now the children are back at school or college we have funded their schoolbooks. We also sent food parcels to the children from the Bread Project.

### HEALTH POST & BIRTHING CENTRE

*Chyamthang, Nepal*

The funding of this health post was the last of our earthquake relief projects. We are happy to announce the birthing center is now open and the first baby was born there in the pandemic.



### TREE PLANTING

*Braga, Nepal*

This was our first project in Nepal and although very small scale it continues to be run by Karma Gurung and his wife. Every year they collect seeds from local indigenous species, plant, protect and grow them before planting out the saplings. Due to dryness, high altitude and harsh climate only about two hundred small trees planted out onto the hillsides every year. Some are planted on communal land to provide a sustainable resource for the community, whilst others are taken by local people to plant on their own land. Despite lockdowns and the pandemic Karma has managed to keep the nursery going.

## THE BREAD PROJECT

*Kathmandu, Nepal*

In March 2020 the tourism industry in Nepal was hit hard by the pandemic and lockdowns. It resulted in a huge rise in the number of unemployed, homeless, and hungry in Kathmandu. Many businesses and individuals that depended fully or partly on the travel industry collapsed as have so many others and there were no government schemes in Nepal to support those left without jobs. Thousands had no income and could not pay rent or buy food, and, although the situation is different from the devastating earthquake in 2015, the country – especially Kathmandu – was on its knees once again.

The Bread Project was our initial response to help people in Nepal needing food. During Nepal's first lockdown our local partner in Kathmandu,

Karma Lama, started baking bread to sell. Any bread left he gave away to those living on the streets. The Exodus Foundation started to fund Karma to expand his efforts. More bread was baked and three of our local leaders (Bikash, Kumar and Sukman) helped distribute the food parcels when it was safe to do so. Over 10 weeks we funded 1,000 food parcels at a cost of £1 per parcel which went to the homeless and vulnerable across Kathmandu.



## TREE PLANTING

*Ladakh, Northern India*

In late 2019 the Exodus Foundation teamed up with Sankalp Taru for Project Green Leh Ladakh (Tress for Livelihood). The aim is to plant mostly fruit trees and increase green cover in the cold high-altitude desert of Ladakh. Planting trees has many advantages – a sustainable source of income will be generated; CO2 is sequestered as the trees will filter air pollutants and it helps with biodiversity conservation as the trees provide protection and food. Planting trees helps with water security as the mature trees will regulate water flow and recharge ground water. Trees also help to prevent landslides and the fruit can be sold to provide a sustainable source of income. In November 2019 the Exodus Foundation funded 4,000 saplings which were taken to Ladakh and stored over the winter in bunkers. They were to be planted out in April 2020. Due to the pandemic and lockdown the planting out was delayed until May 2020 when luckily lockdown was lifted, and the locals managed to plant the 4,000 trees in 7 villages in western Ladakh. In November 2020, through the Exodus Foundation Community Kickstart fund, a further 250 saplings were taken



to Ladakh and in April 2021 they were planed out on the land of two of our Ladakhi staff in Ranbirpura and Karu. A further 500 saplings have been taken to Ladakh in November 2021 and will be stored in bunkers over the winter to be planted out on land of our Ladakhi trekking staff in April 2022.

## FOOD PARCELS

*For trekking staff in Nepal and India*

As we moved into 2021 it became obvious that international travel would not start again. Our regular trekking staff in Nepal (at least 78) plus those in Ladakh and the Indian Himalaya (approx. 20) were beginning to struggle without the income from trekking. The Exodus Foundation launched a COVID Emergency Relief Appeal, to which we had a fantastic response. This has allowed us to help our staff in various parts of the world including the Himalaya. From June 2021 until Janaury 2022 we have helped with over 1,000 food packages at a cost of £25 per package for our staff in Nepal, Ladakh and the Indian Himalaya.



### CARE HOME

*Kyanjin Gompa, upper Langtang, Nepal*

This care home in the upper part of the Langtang Valley is home for 6 elderly Nepalis who lost their families and/or homes in the 2015 earthquake. Throughout the pandemic we have continued to provide food, fuel, clothing, and bedding for these elderly and vulnerable people.



### WOMEN'S ECO CAFES AND FELTED HANDICRAFTS

*Ladakh, Northern India*

All 3 of the cafes we fund have been closed since winter 2019. Hopefully tourism and trekking will be back again in summer 2022 and we will invest in some training and get the cafes up and running again. As felting needles are not available in India we are hoping the ones they had lasted and we will be funding more in 2022.



### RANBIRPURA TEMPLE/ COMMUNITY HALL

*Ranbirpura, India*

Good news on this project, which we have supported the last few years. During the pandemic the villagers from Ranbirpura gave their time and the temple/community hall is now completed from the outside and almost completed inside. Thanks to Chospel in Ladakh for motivating the villagers to help with this. In 2022 we will donate a last £200 to help finish the inside.

### HIGH ALTITUDE WORKERS WELFARE ASSOCIATION

*Nepal*

This small Nepali NGO was set up by a group of Nepali climbing sherpas to help the families of climbing sherpas (and other trekking staff or porters) who have lost their lives or livelihood climbing or trekking. The last few years have seen major disasters on Everest and many young women have been left with no husband or income and children to educate. We continue to sponsor the education of five children.



## EXODUS FOUNDATIONS SCHOLARSHIP

Sarita Praja (on the left) was chosen for the Exodus scholarship for 2020. She is studying to be a nurse at the Nightingale Nursing College Lalitpur. Her 3-year course began in November 2020. Due to the pandemic her classes have been a mixture of online and in school. She has been doing practical training in an hospital in Kathmandu and is waiting for her first-year exams. She loves the course and after a nervous start in the hospital she has enjoyed the practical side of the course. We will be sponsoring Sarita in her second year or training.



## A BIG THANK YOU

*To all Exodus clients and friends, who have donated so generously this year, many of who have raised funds through various challenges or through giving talks. We are very grateful to everyone who supports us.*

### PETE BURRELL

A Trustee of the Exodus Travels Foundation, and former MD of Exodus Travels, Pete did a sponsored virtual Everest challenge. From the 1st-5th July he walked up Meldon Hill in Chagford 40 times which equalled 8,849m, the height of Everest. He raised a grand total of £1,728 for the Emergency food parcel relief for India and Nepal

### EXODUS STAFF & FRIENDS CHALLENGE

Collectively Exodus staff and friends travelled on food, bike and even horseback, the miles from London to Kathmandu. They raised £3,155 for the Emergency food parcel relief for India and Nepal.

Thanks to our local partners who have coordinated much of our work on the ground. We especially want to thank the following:

Our local agent in Nepal, **Karma Sherpa Lama** has coordinated the Bread Project and the Food Parcels for our trekking staff in Nepal. **Subita, Bikash and Tenzi**, three of our Nepali staff have been trained in Freedom kitbags and have done distributions and training in their villages. And finally, **Chospel and Jigmet** who have helped with the tree planting in Ladakh.

**As a traveller, we believe that you have as important a role as we do. We believe that we provide a framework for sustainable tourism but your choices and actions before, during and after your trip have a considerable part to play.**

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Your contributions really do make a huge difference to the communities we aim to help. Here's a few ways you can donate:

**1** Follow the instructions on the donation page below to see how you can donate:

[www.exodus.enthuse.com/HC](http://www.exodus.enthuse.com/HC)

**2** You can send a donation by cheque to the below address, with a note referencing 'Himalayan Community Project':

Exodus Travels Foundation  
Exodus Travels  
DST House  
St Mark's Hill  
Surbiton  
Surrey KT6 4BH

If you have any queries about any of our projects you can contact Valerie Parkinson at: [valeriepark59@hotmail.com](mailto:valeriepark59@hotmail.com). Please note that Valerie is often out leading treks in the Himalaya and may not always be able to respond to your email enquiries immediately. Alternatively, you can email Kasia Morgan, Head of Sustainability and Community at Exodus Travels, at [kasia.morgan@exodus.co.uk](mailto:kasia.morgan@exodus.co.uk).

If you would like to find out more about the Himalayan Community Projects, use the URL below:

[www.exodus.co.uk/foundation/foundation-projects/the-himalayan-community-project](http://www.exodus.co.uk/foundation/foundation-projects/the-himalayan-community-project)

We are proud to announce that in 2020 and 2021 we won the following awards:



Find out more at:  
[www.exodus.co.uk/foundation](http://www.exodus.co.uk/foundation)

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