

TIBETAN



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HEALING FUND NEWSLETTER

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REPKONG BIRTH CENTER

By Anne R. Pebley



Most Tibetan women in the Tso-ngon (Chinese: Qinghai) region deliver their babies at home with no medical assistance or mid-wife. The reason is often distance to the hospital, lack of transportation and funds to pay for medical care. But another barrier is the hospital: medical staff who may speak only Chinese and are not familiar with Tibetan customs, no room for families, and an intimidating institutional setting. In September, I visited the maternity wards of several hospitals in Tso-ngon and spoke to doctors and nurses.

In hospitals and township clinics in Tibetan areas women often have trouble communicating with their doctors during or after delivery because many medical staff speak only Chinese. Women who do have their babies in hospitals are generally accompanied by family members. Family members remain at the hospital until the new mother returns home and they play an important role in caring for the patient. But hospital maternity wards are poorly designed to accommodate patients' families. They have two or three patient beds per room and no lounges or other areas that families can stay in. So patient rooms are crowded with patients, their new babies, and their families all in a small area.

The contrast with the Tibetan Healing Fund's impressive new Birth Center, which I also visited in September, could not be more striking. The Birth Center has developed an innovative new model of culturally-appropriate low-cost maternity care which is designed to reduce the barriers that Tibetan women

face in receiving high quality care during delivery. The Birth Center model includes four crucial elements. First, the highly skilled and experienced medical and support staff, headed by Dr. Tsering Kye, are all Tibetan and all services are provided in the Tibetan language, greatly reducing stress for women during delivery. Second, unlike hospitals, the Birth Center buildings are non-institutional, welcoming, and decorated with beautiful Tibetan designs. The beauty and Tibetan character of the building itself is excellent advertising. During my visit, two groups of Tibetans stopped by the Birth Center because they were attracted by its appearance and stopped to see what it was.

Third, the Birth Center has suites for patients and their family which include a large traditional bed with home-made quilts, cooking and bathroom facilities, and a living area. Each suite is laid out like a single-room version of the houses that many patients live in. The accommodations for families also greatly reduce stress and worry for patients and improve the care patients get during labor and post-partum. Despite its superior facilities and quality of service, the cost of delivery at the Birth Center is lower than in hospitals and services are offered on a sliding fee scale. Dr. Tsering Kye and her staff have also undertaken an extensive outreach effort to midwives, patients, and health centers throughout Tso-ngon.

The Tibetan Healing Fund's Repkong Birth Center is an outstanding facility that will serve as an important model for maternity centers throughout Tibet and in other low income and underserved areas of the world. Built and run on a shoe-string budget, it has accomplished a remarkable amount in the year and a half it has been open. The heart and soul of the Birth Center is Dr. Tsering Kye. She has fought hard for the Birth Center against many obstacles, provides outstanding medical care and management, and is one of the most compassionate, caring, and committed people I have ever met. The Tibetan Healing Fund is very lucky to have her as Director of the Birth Center.

Anne Pebley is Bixby Professor of Population at the UCLA School of Public Health. She holds a PhD in Sociology and Demography. She traveled to the Tso-ngon area in September to teach a course at Qinghai University Tibetan Medical College and to visit several projects of the Tibetan Healing Fund.

A LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

Dear Friends,

Hope this message finds you and your families having enjoyed the holidays in great health and spirits. Thanks to your kind support, both financially and through countless volunteer hours, we are now approaching ten years of service to improve the public health situation for thousands of Tibetan people living in rural communities. This is an exciting and critical time for the work of Tibetan Healing Fund. Although there is still great need and work to be done in the future, we should still celebrate what we have accomplished together.

I hope that many of you will be planning to attend Tibetan Healing Fund's 10th Anniversary Celebration Gala and Benefit Dinner in Seattle on February 12th, 2011. It is an opportunity to celebrate this important ten year milestone while still contributing to the future of our public health and education programs. For those of you who are unable to attend, please know that I do think of your support that contributed to getting us this far!

After graduating from my studies at the UCLA School of Public Health last summer, I returned to Tibet in August and began teaching Tibetan medical students in graduate level courses, working on improving the curriculum and training of medical students, and developing modern research methodology and thesis writing courses at the Tso-Ngon (Qinghai) University Tibetan Medical College. It is rewarding and challenging work.

We are currently working on detailed Tibetan Healing Fund project reports for you and hope to have them translated into English shortly. In the meantime, please find current summaries in this newsletter and know that more information will be forth coming. The communication resources in Tibet are limited and we really appreciate your patience and understanding. Our volunteers and advisors here in Tibet are working very hard and we are so fortunate to have them on our team!

Thank you once again for your generous support that has allowed Tibetan Healing Fund to carry out such vital programs over the last ten years. I sincerely hope that you will continue to stay with our volunteer run nonprofit organization so that we can continue for many more years. From this great distance, I wish all of you and your families to have great health and much success in your work, studies, and life!

All the best,



Kunchok Gyaltzen

UPDATES FROM THE FIELD



YUSHU EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

Since April 2010, over \$25,000 was received by donors for the Yushu earthquake relief services. The funds were sent to the Tso-Ngon (Qinghai) Tibetan Medical College. The medical faculty and students from this college have been providing free medical care and supplies to the earthquake victims over the last few months since the earthquake struck. Recently, a medical team from the college was sent to Yushu in November to provide additional follow-up medical care, supplies, and medicine to the local Tibetan communities who survived the earthquake and are still suffering. We are in the process of gathering information and preparing a detailed report for you.



TIBETAN MIDWIFERY TRAINING

We started to conduct short training sessions for Tibetan women at the village level in Malho Tibetan Prefecture. The midwifery training curriculum will be maternal and child health care knowledge and skills that include prenatal care, delivery skills, postnatal care, newborn and child care, family planning, and common diseases management. The first session began on December 23, 2010 and will continue for a total of 12 sessions. We are planning to train 254 women total from 254 villages in the entire prefecture.

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MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH EDUCATION PROJECT

Fifty Tibetan medical students from Tso-Ngon (Qinghai) Tibetan Medical College will be selected to return to their home regions during their winter break and each lead classes on basic maternal and child health care for 60 women for each region, which will reach a total of 3,000 women. This project is currently in the planning stages and will be implemented during this upcoming winter break.



FIELD VOLUNTEERS

In summary, we have hundreds of Tibetan people volunteering their time to carry out the work of the Tibetan Healing Fund in the field. People from the Tso-Ngon (Qinghai) Tibetan Medical College, Kumbum Tibetan Medical College, Rebkong Tibetan Birth Center, and also from local schools and hospitals work as volunteers. They are truly heroes who work with great passion and determination to see our projects succeed.

DR. GYALTSEN REACHES AN EDUCATIONAL MILESTONE

By Jessica Farrazaino

On June 11, 2010 I had the honor of witnessing a dream come true for Dr. Kunchok Gyaltsen as he became, Dr. Kunchok Gyaltsen, PhD. Not only is Dr. Gyaltsen a doctor of Tibetan medicine, but he also earned his PhD from UCLA's School of Public Health.



The journey from rural Tibet to PhD has been a long and windy road for Dr. Gyaltsen. Despite considerable obstacles, he remained devoted to his goal to achieve a PhD and return home to inspire future generations of Tibetans to reach beyond their wildest imagination and to create groundbreaking curriculum for Tibetan medical students interested in preventative medicine.

I first met Dr. Gyaltsen in Vermont while studying for his first master's degree, a Master of International Management. He went on to study public health at Mahidol University in Thailand before returning to Tibet to take the helm of the Tibetan Medical Hospital at Kumbum Monastery, building an implementation team for Tibetan Healing Fund projects, and undertaking multiple evaluations of health and education needs of rural Tibetans.

Once he was comfortable with things in Tibet he returned to the United States to fulfill his dream of attaining the highest educational achievement, a PhD. While studying at UCLA, he established a relationship between UCLA and Qinghai University School of Tibetan Medicine. Students at Qinghai University will learn public health as taught at the best schools in the United States. These courses will be incorporated into the Tibetan medical curriculum creating a new system of medicine that draws on the best from modern social science and meshes flawlessly with the thousand year old traditions of Tibetan medicine.

SAVE THE DATE - THF GALA AND BENEFIT DINNER

Tibetan Healing Fund's 10th Anniversary Gala & Benefit Dinner "A decade of striving to achieve healthier lives through education in rural Tibetan communities."

Saturday, Feb. 12th, 2011 at 6 p.m.
Seattle Biomedical Research Institute Building
307 Westlake Ave, North Seattle, WA 98109

Honorable Guest Speaker
Anne R. Pebley, Ph.D.
Professor & Chair, Community Health Sciences
UCLA School of Public Health, UCLA Dept. of Sociology



Dr. Pebley recently visited Tibetan Healing Fund's maternal & child health project sites and taught at a local Tibetan Medical College in Sept. 2010. She will be sharing her experience with you.

ADMISSION BY RESERVATION ONLY.

Please make your reservation via email to Info@TibetanHealingFund.org

GIVE. VOLUNTEER.

GIVE

Although, it's been a difficult year for fundraising, we continue to keep our projects alive thanks to you. Please consider giving soon so we can keep our projects active in the new year. Here are a few examples of what your funds accomplished during 2009-2010 for the Repkong Birth Center:

- \$ 111.00 purchased 3 sets of window & door curtains
- \$ 23.00 purchased 2 baby baths & a thermos
- \$ 300.00 purchased 1 large water heater
- \$ 120.00 purchased a wood stove, mattress, and electric blanket
- \$ 1,500.00 constructed a Midwives' training room
- \$ 1,500.00 constructed a pharmacy
- \$ 225.00 purchased cooking equipment
- \$ 588.00 purchased a high volume & industrial strength washer & dryer
- \$ 264.00 purchased 3 wood stoves (\$88 each)

You are welcome to request where your donation is to be designated for:

- Repkong Birth Center
- Midwifery Training

- Yushu Earthquake Relief Medical Services
- Maternal & Child Health Care Training in Villages
- General Fund. To be applied where most in need.

Make checks payable to: the "Tibetan Healing Fund"

Mailing address: Tibetan Healing Fund
819 N. 49th Street, Suite 105
Seattle, WA 98103

To pay by credit card, visit our website at www.TibetanHealingFund.org and click on the "Donate" button to make a secure payment via our Paypal account.

VOLUNTEER

Tibetan Healing Fund is a volunteer run nonprofit organization. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities in the U.S., please send us an email to: info@tibetanhealingfund.org. We would be thrilled to have you join us!

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