



buddhist global relief

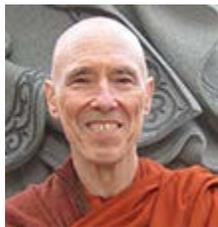


helpinghands

Volume 7 | Number 3 | Fall 2015

Message for a Globalized World

By Ven Bhikkhu Bodhi



Over the past four decades the world has been dramatically transformed in ways that none but a handful of prophets and visionaries could have foreseen even a hundred years ago. From a multitude of loosely connected nation-states it has evolved into a tightly knit global community linked together by rapid means of transportation and instantaneous media of communication. Old barriers of space and time have dropped away, confronting us with new vistas of self-understanding and forcing us to recognize the hard truth that we all face a common human destiny. The claims to special privilege of a particular people, nation, race, or religion now sound hollow. As occupants of the same planet, we either flourish together or perish together. In the long run between these two alternatives no middle ground is possible.

But while our sophisticated technology has enabled us to dissect the atom and decipher genetic codes, each day's news reports remind us that our mastery over the external world has not ushered in the utopia that we had so confidently anticipated. To the contrary, the shrinking of global boundaries has given rise to fresh problems of enormous scope: social, political, and psychological problems so grave they throw into question the continued survival of the human race. The problems that challenge the global community today take many forms. They include the depletion of the earth's natural resources and the despoliation of the environment; rising climate change; regional tensions of ethnic and religious origins; the spread of nuclear weapons; disregard for human rights; the widening gap between the rich and the poor. While such problems have been extensively discussed from social, political, and economic points of view, they also cry out for critical examination from a spiritual viewpoint as well.

These problems cannot be seen as isolated phenomena to be treated by piecemeal solutions. When we look deeply into them, seeking their hidden roots and subtle interconnections, we are struck by their essentially symptomatic character. Beneath their outward diversity they appear to be so many manifestations of a common root, a deep and hidden spiritual malignancy infecting our collective existence. This common root might be briefly characterized as a stubborn insistence on placing short-term, narrow self-interests—including the interests of the social or ethnic groups to which we belong—above the long-range good of the whole human community. The many social ills that assail us cannot be adequately accounted for without bringing into view the powerful human drives that lie behind them. And what is distinctive about these drives is that they derive from a pernicious distortion in the functioning of

the human mind. Blindly we run in pursuit of factional, divisive ends even when such pursuits threaten to be ultimately self-destructive.

The Buddha's teaching offers us two keys to resolving the great dilemmas facing us today. The first is its uncompromisingly realistic analysis of the psychological springs of human suffering; the second is the path of ethical transformation it proposes as a solution. The Buddha explains that suffering, in both the personal and social dimensions of our lives, arises from three mental factors called the unwholesome roots. These three roots are greed, hatred, and delusion, the three prongs of the ego-consciousness. The aim of the Buddhist spiritual path is to gradually subdue these three evil roots by cultivating the mental factors directly opposed to them. These are the three wholesome roots, namely: non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion, which can also be expressed as generosity, loving-kindness, and understanding.

If we contemplate the dangers that hang over us in our globalized world order, it becomes clear that they have assumed such proportions due to the unrestrained proliferation of greed, hatred, and delusion as the basis of human conduct. It is not that these dark forces of the mind were first awakened in the twentieth century; they have been the deep springs of suffering and destructiveness since time immemorial. But the one-sided development of humankind has today given the unwholesome roots an unprecedented power that veers ever closer to the catastrophic.



Through the prevalence of greed the world has been transformed into a global marketplace where human beings are reduced to the status of consumers, even commodities, and where materialistic desires are provoked at volatile intensities. Through the prevalence of hatred, national and ethnic differences become the breeding ground of suspicion and enmity, exploding in violence and endless cycles of revenge. Delusion sustains greed

and hatred by giving rise to false beliefs and ideologies promoted to justify destructive courses of action.

In the new era marked by the triumph of the free-market economy the most pernicious delusion that hangs over us is the belief that the path to human fulfillment lies in the satisfaction of artificially induced desires. Such a project can only provoke more and more greed leading to ever more reckless degrees of selfishness, and from the clash of self-seeking individuals, the result will necessarily be strife and violence. The entire drive of modern civilization has been toward the conquest and mastery of the external world. Yet because the human mind, the ultimate agent behind all the monumental achievements of science, has pitifully neglected itself, we continue to move in the same dark channels in which we moved in earlier centuries—the channels of greed, hatred, and delusion—only now equipped with more powerful instruments of destruction.

We have managed to achieve a spectacular understanding of the material world, but we have utterly neglected the attempt to understand ourselves. As long as we continue to shirk the task of turning our attention within, to understand and master our own minds, our impressive accomplishments in the external sphere will fail to yield their proper fruits. While they may make life safer and more comfortable, they will still spawn consequences of great severity and peril, despite our best intentions. For the human race to live together peacefully on this small planet, the challenge facing us is that of coming to understand and transform ourselves.

It is here that the Buddha's teaching becomes especially timely, even for those who are not prepared to accept the full range of Buddhist faith and doctrine. In its diagnosis of greed, hatred, and delusion as the underlying causes of human suffering, the Buddha-Dhamma enables us to see the hidden roots of our personal and collective predicaments. By offering us a practical path of training that helps us to remove what is harmful and to foster what is beneficial, the Dhamma offers us an effective remedy for tackling the problems of the globe in the one place where they are directly accessible to us: in our own minds. Because it places the burden of responsibility for our redemption on ourselves, calling for personal effort and energetic application to the training of the mind, the Buddha's teaching will inevitably have a bitter edge. But by providing an acute diagnosis of our illness and a precise path to recovery, it also offers us an elevating message of hope.

(Originally published in the newsletter of the Buddhist Publication Society, 1996. This version has been lightly edited.)

Building a Dream in Haiti

By BGR Staff



Since 2010, BGR has been a regular partner and supporter of the What If? Foundation, a US-based organization working in Haiti. Our partnership began with BGR support for the Lamanjay free lunch program, funded by WIF. This program, which continues to this day, provides thousands of free meals to hungry children in the Ti Plas Kazo neighborhood of the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince—a substantial daily meal of vegetables, rice, and protein. For many of these children, the meal offered by Lamanjay is their only meal of the day.

Aware that education is the most effective ladder up from poverty, in 2012 WIF started a scholarship program to enable poor

children to attend school. They thereby opened doors of opportunity that in the past were tightly shut against children from poor families, who must pay exorbitant fees to enroll their kids in school. Almost from its inception, BGR has partnered on this program, too, and we have supported it consistently over the past three years. Now WIF is in the process of constructing a building to serve as a permanent home for the food and education programs. The building will bring a desperately needed school into this desperate neighborhood.

Recently BGR received a message from Suzanne Alberga, WIF Executive Director, reporting on the progress of the project. Her message is just below. I hope this gives you, our donors and supporters, some insight into how your donations to BGR, whether large or small, are having a positive and uplifting impact on the lives of these children. Remember that without such help, these curious, capable kids, so eager to learn, would not be able to attend school, and would thus face insurmountable obstacles to a life of dignity and decency.



Children of Port-au-Prince Watching Construction

Dear "Building The Dream" Supporter,

I am writing to share exciting news about the great progress being made on our "Building The Dream" project. You, as one of the project's donors, are an important part of making this long-held dream a reality. Thank you for your support and encouragement!

Building in Haiti has been a complex process, but after many months of careful planning with our partner Na Rive, architects, engineers, and construction companies, we are in the exciting stage of watching the new building take form. An experienced Port-au-Prince based crew is working hard in the summer heat and the new kitchen-cafeteria-school building is already more than one third complete!

The Na Rive staff and entire community are deeply grateful and excited about all this new building represents. Not only will it offer a permanent home for the food and education programs we support, but it will also bring a desperately needed school into the neighborhood.



Bulldozers at Work on Construction Site

I recently visited the construction site and could feel hope and enthusiasm growing with every brick being laid. So much love and devotion has gone into this project over the years and now it looks like we're just a few months away from its completion. To watch the building go up is very moving, very inspiring. And it wouldn't have been possible without you.

The project architect, Chuck Newman of Schools for Children of the World, together with the construction manager, estimate that the building will be complete by the end of the year!

And, to prepare for this, we are in the final stretch of raising the resources needed to fully fund this construction project. To date, we have raised more than 90% of the building's construction costs (about \$700,000). And we have about \$50,000 more to go.

To help close this gap, we are planning an Indiegogo on-line fundraising campaign that will take place this fall. We'll send you a link to the campaign as we get closer so that you can forward it on to anyone you think might be interested in supporting such an important and exciting project. And, as always, please contact me if you have any suggestions

of individuals or organizations we might approach about supporting “Building the Dream” (info@whatiffoundation.org or 510-528-1100).

On behalf of the What If? Foundation board and staff, our founder Margaret Trost, our partner Na Rive, and all the children of Ti Plas Kazo, Mesi Anpil (thank you so much) for being a part of “Building The Dream”!

With gratitude,
Suzanne Alberga
Executive Director
www.whatiffoundation.org

Battling Climate Change in the Himalayas, One Woman at a Time

By Jennifer Russ



The Indian state of Uttarakhand, in the lower Himalayas, holds the fifteenth rank in agriculture in the country. In the past three years, Uttarakhand has received less-than-normal rainfall. This has affected crop production and adversely impacted the livelihood of the population, almost 78% of which depends on agriculture.

On these mountainous farms, a family’s survival depends on its ability to adapt to increasingly erratic weather patterns. About 90% of agricultural lands in Uttarakhand are fed by rain and are thus highly vulnerable to climate change and degradation due to erratic and unpredictable rainfall and severe erosion of soil nutrients. This has posed a major threat to agriculture in the region.

Women play a crucial role in hill agriculture, as they undertake up to 90% of the total work in agriculture and animal care. The decline in productivity due to climate change and degradation of natural resources has affected the food security of women the most.

Since 2012, Buddhist Global Relief has been partnering with Oxfam India on a project that is equipping women in thirteen villages in Uttarakhand to fight along the front lines of climate change. The core of the project is the formation of women’s farmers associations, where women meet and learn new farming techniques like the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) and System of Wheat Intensification (SWI). These techniques enable farmers to produce more crops with less labor, fewer inputs, and less expenditures.

The result has been a 40% yield increase in rice and a 30% yield increase in wheat. These increases not only result in more food for their families but more income. With the extra money, the families can stop struggling to survive. They feel less pressure to keep their children home from school.



At meetings of these farmer associations, Oxfam teaches women about climate change and how to maintain farms that are resilient to it. The women establish seed banks that preserve traditional plants while promoting hardier varieties. Farmers give back twice as many seeds as they take, which reduces their reliance on the market. The project also allows farmers to take out lines of credit with low interest so they may expand their farms. Together, women have more power to demand better prices for their products in the market.

Over 550 farmers across thirteen villages in Uttarakhand have benefited from this project. In the Gewali Village, one farmer was inspired to expand the project on her own. Sarita Devi, the wife of a shopkeeper and mother of three, manages the farm and livestock that are her family's main source of income. Before Oxfam came to her village, Sarita and her husband were unable to support their family. Sarita joined a farmer's association right away and was among the first to adopt SRI and SWI.

That season, she enjoyed a higher yield and more income, but she didn't stop there. She held demonstrations in her field and persuaded twelve other women in the Gewali village to adopt sustainable farming practices. Oxfam India reports that "Sarita Devi is an inspiration to all!"



Indian women farmers, taking control of their own destiny

Jennifer Russ is a staff writer for BGR.

BGR Walk to Feed the Hungry

By Kim Behan



For the past five years BGR's main fundraising activity has been our "Annual Walk to Feed the Hungry." We started in 2010 with one walk in New Jersey. Over the next few years, as friends of BGR around the country responded to the first walk, the walks have spread until they now take place in multiple locations across the US, with a parallel walk in Great Britain and a couple of solidarity walks by our partners in Asia. The 2015 Walk to Feed the Hungry, our sixth, will be taking place in nine locations in the US. The

places and dates are listed below. Please save the date and join us in a walk near you. You will find participating in the walk a joyful, uplifting, and meaningful way to express compassion in action, offering an outlet from hunger for struggling communities around the world and here in America. If you can't walk yourself, please donate generously to support others who will be walking.

Our chairperson, Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, will be participating in five walks this year: first in Milford, Michigan, then on the West Coast in Seattle and San Francisco, then back on the East Coast in New York and Connecticut.

This year the BGR Walk received two distinctive honors. First, the Mayor of San Francisco, Edwin M. Lee, designated the day of the BGR Walk as "Walk to Feed the Hungry Day" in San Francisco:

"... Whereas the City and County of San Francisco recognizes the work and efforts of Buddhist Global Relief and applauds them for working tirelessly to help people around the world escape from chronic hunger and malnutrition; now therefore be it resolved, that I, Edwin M. Lee, Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco, do hereby proclaim October 24, 2015 as 'Walk to Feed the Hungry Day' in San Francisco."

Second, the Mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio, sent us a message of felicitation for our upcoming walk on October 31. He writes:

"I am pleased to join Buddhist Global Relief in welcoming everyone to the Walk to Feed the Hungry in New York City.... Today, Buddhist Global Relief exemplifies that quintessential New York spirit as it gathers friends and families from all faith backgrounds in Riverside Park in a shared commitment to end global hunger. I am delighted to express my appreciation to all of the participants: every step you take this day is a step toward a more equitable world."

Milford MI	Sunday	September 27
Houston TX	Saturday	October 3
St. Louis MO	Sunday	October 4
San Jose CA	Sunday	October 11
Seattle WA	Saturday	October 17
San Francisco CA	Saturday	October 24
New York NY	Saturday	October 31
Wilmington CT	Sunday	November 8
Los Angeles CA	TBD	

Kim Behan is the Executive Director of Buddhist Global Relief.

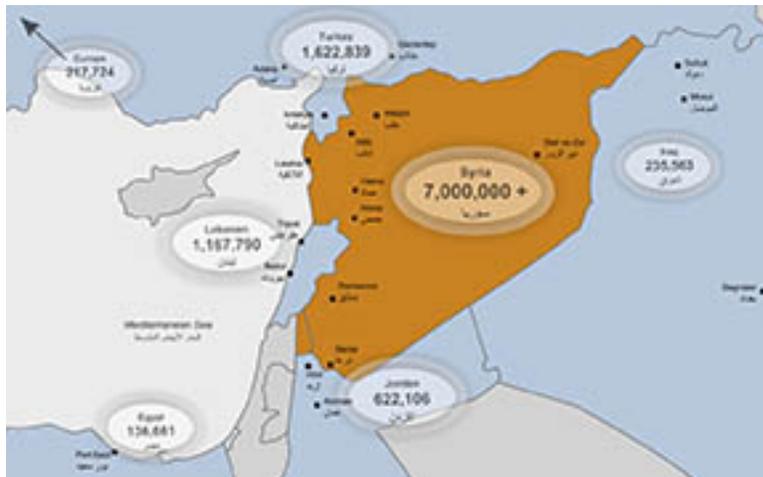
BGR Responds to Syrian Refugee Crisis

By BGR Staff



Syria's civil war is widely considered the worst humanitarian disaster of our time. A brutal civil war has raged for four years, resulting in the deaths of 220,000 people, half of whom are believed to be civilians. Bombings have destroyed crowded cities and horrific human rights violations are widespread. Basic necessities like food and medical care are sparse. According to reports from Syrian refugees, children are becoming increasingly hungry due to cuts in the amount of food being provided to them.

More than 11 million people have been displaced thus far. The UN estimates that 7.6 million people are displaced internally. The others have fled across the borders. The majority of Syrian refugees are living in Jordan and Lebanon, countries with weak infrastructure whose limited resources are nearing a breaking point under the strain. In August 2013, more Syrians escaped into northern Iraq at a newly opened border crossing. Now they are trapped by that country's own insurgent conflict, and Iraq is struggling to meet the needs of Syrian refugees on top of more than one million internally displaced Iraqis.



While the conflict within the country is complex, with a multitude of groups fighting the Syrian government and each other, one fact is simple: millions of Syrians are suffering and in urgent need of help.*

In recognition of the urgency of the situation, BGR recently donated \$12,000 to provide emergency relief to Syrian refugees, both those displaced within the country and those living in neighboring countries. This contribution has been divided

evenly between six relief organizations working with Syrian refugees, as follows:

(1) [Global Giving](#)

This fund will support life-saving assistance and relief efforts for Syrians displaced by the conflict, both within Syria and in neighboring countries. The fund will help survivors and victims get necessary immediate relief supplies like food and hygiene kits, as well as provide long-term support through activities such as building water systems and providing educational supplies and job training.

(2) [International Rescue Committee](#)

The International Rescue Committee is providing relief to millions of uprooted people inside Syria; in neighboring Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan; in Afghanistan; on the shores of Greece; and in 25 resettlement offices in the United States.

(3) [Medical Teams International](#)

Medical Teams International's primary goal in Lebanon [where Syrian refugees are settled] is health outreach. Basic health and dental care prevents and reduces the impact of disease on children, women, and men in the settlement. Additionally, they train community volunteers to provide household outreach and education complements ongoing health services at mobile medical units.

(4) [Mercy Corps](#)

They are delivering food and clean water, improving shelters and providing families with clothes, mattresses, and other household essentials. They are helping children cope with trauma and leading constructive activities to nurture their healthy development. And they are helping host communities and refugees work together to mitigate tensions and find solutions to limited resources.

(5) [Oxfam America](#)

In partnership with the Syrian Ministry of Water Resources, UNICEF, and other aid providers, Oxfam is now providing clean water to Syrians inside their country. They have been helping to repair water systems, including wells, and truck in water. So far, 45 projects have been completed and 14 others are being implemented.

(6) [United States Fund for UNICEF](#)

UNICEF has been on the ground since the conflict began, helping to mobilize the largest humanitarian operation in history and working closely with partners to provide education, physical protection, psychological support and clothing to Syrian refugee children in Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt and other countries; immunize children against disease; and provide millions of people with access to safe drinking water.

** The above information has been gathered from the websites of Mercy Corps and Oxfam America.*

BGR Joins Every Woman Every Child Commitment

By Carla Prater



On the invitation of the organizers, Buddhist Global Relief recently submitted a commitment to the Every Woman Every Child program, a multi-stakeholder movement to implement the United Nations' new Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. The program focuses on countries with a high burden of women's and children's health problems to accelerate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as the new objectives put forward by the Sustainable Development Goals framework.



Spearheaded by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Every Woman Every Child recognizes that all partners – including governments, philanthropic organizations, multilateral institutions, civil society, business, health professionals and academia – have an essential role to play in improving women’s and children’s health. Commitments to the Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health represent pledges to address a specific need outlined in the Global Strategy, ultimately reducing preventable mortality and promoting the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents everywhere.

Under its commitment, Buddhist Global Relief has pledged to contribute \$1,800,000 toward programs targeting women and children’s nutritional needs, education, and agricultural training from May 2015-April 2020. We expect these projects to directly benefit over 16,000 people.

Carla Prater is assistant director of Buddhist Global Relief.

BGR is Changing Our Mailing Address ***How You Can Help BGR***

By BGR Staff

Interested in volunteering for BGR? By joining our team you will meet others who share your values and are working to put compassion into action and help create a better world. Some volunteers need to be located in a particular place, but most can work from home, wherever that may be. Please check the list of Volunteer Opportunities on our website and contact our volunteer coordinator at miroehm@buddhistglobalrelief.org for further information.

In our ongoing efforts to improve our processes and reply more quickly to our donors, we are changing our mailing address to: Buddhist Global Relief, 2020 Route 301, Carmel NY 10512, USA. We are able to use this address due to the generous support offered by the [Buddhist Association of the US](#).

As always, donations to BGR are welcome. You can donate by PayPal or credit card on the [BGR website](#), on [FirstGiving](#), [Hopsie](#), or by check mailed to:

Buddhist Global Relief
2020 Route 301
Carmel NY 10512, USA

Thank you for your help!
