



Prosperity Through Resilient Livelihood A project in Lakhimpur Kheri, India



By Patricia Brick - Manju Devi cultivates peas, tomatoes, eggplants, and chili peppers on 1/5 acre of land in her Musadei village in Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh, India. Through Oxfam India's Prosperity Through Resilient Livelihood project, Devi and sixteen other women farmers in the Santoshi Mahila Kisan Samuh collective gather for a monthly "farmers' field school" to learn sustainable practices for improving soil quality, agricultural productivity, and climate resilience.

Supported by a \$20,000 grant from Buddhist Global Relief, the Prosperity Through Resilient Livelihood project is working to improve the lives of women farmers in twenty villages in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri district. With an emphasis on community-led knowledge-sharing, support, and collective organizing, the project has created 22 new women farmers' groups offering trainings in organic methods and other climate-resilient agricultural practices to improve productivity and income and lower costs. The project also seeks to improve farmers' access to government grants and projects by developing connections between village groups and the government agriculture department.

Women comprise more than a third of the agricultural work force in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, and it is estimated that 85 percent of working women in rural areas are farmers or farm workers. But with few land titles in their names, women farmers are far less likely than their male counterparts to benefit from government grants and projects: only 4 percent of women in Uttar Pradesh have access to credit, and less than one percent have participated in government training projects.





Farming in general in this area of Uttar Pradesh is subject to drought, flood, poor soil quality, poor seed replacement, and general low productivity. An estimated 33 percent of the state's population lives in poverty, including many farming families.

In the project's first 6 months, women farmers like Manju Devi have already seen increases in their crop productivity, income, and food security. Through its work in establishing women's groups and other farmers'

collectives, the Prosperity Through Resilient Livelihood project is also supporting the development of local communities of mutual support over the long term.



Patricia Brick is a writer and editor in the New York metropolitan area. The article was adapted from the Oxfam India's report to BGR on their work in Uttar Pradesh, India.

Executive Director Update

By Tom Spies



Dear Friends,
I'd like to take a moment to update you on some of the activities we are currently working on at BGR, as well as some of the highlights of the past few months.

Fundraising:

Our main annual fundraising event, the Walk to Feed the Hungry, concluded in November and was held in eleven (11) locations. The walk events once again yielded substantial donation revenue for BGR. We hope to grow the event further by adding to the list of walk locations this coming year.

The next Walk to Feed the Hungry event is coming up on Saturday May 20, 2017 in Surrey, United Kingdom. The event is run by *New Buddha Way*, a Sangha/Meditation/Cultivation group located in Surrey, UK. You can visit their website at <http://www.newbuddhaway.org>. This will be the 4th annual fundraising event held on behalf of BGR by *New Buddha Way*, and we are deeply grateful for their efforts and their support of BGR.

If you are interested in holding a walk event in your area, or your own special event such as a day of mindfulness, a chant-in, a bike ride, or other special event to raise funds and share information about the work of BGR, we will assist you with brochures, flyers, and general guidance on holding the event. Just contact us by email at info@buddhistglobalrelief.org.

Once again this year BGR will be participating in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). The CFC is the official workplace giving campaign of US Federal government employees. Past years' participation in the CFC has been very beneficial in providing donation support to BGR. Also this year, for the first time, BGR will be participating in the New Jersey Employees Charitable Campaign, the official workplace giving campaign for employees of the State of New Jersey.

The annual BGR Concert to Feed the Hungry, a beautiful and uplifting night of jazz performances by renowned artists, will be held on June 17, 2017 in NYC. More details can be found [here](#).

Outreach:

BGR has a new local NYC affiliate website, *Compassion NYC*, whose function is to interface with local NYC donors and volunteers, and to raise awareness of local NYC micro events. You can visit the website at <https://www.compassionnyc.org>. BGR, through *Compassion NYC*, will sponsor a bus trip and “rolling retreat” to attend the *People's Climate March* in Washington DC on April 29, 2017. Our thanks go to our Community Outreach Coordinator, Regina Valdez, for creating the new website and for organizing the bus trip. Tickets for this event and details can be found on the *Compassion NYC* website at this link:

<https://www.compassionnyc.org/rolling-retreat/>

Organizational Matters/Work:

Internally, the staff and IT members at BGR have been engaged in projects to strengthen BGR's infrastructure. Some of these projects include:

- Migration of the BGR website to the *Joomla* platform, which is a platform that allows BGR staff and volunteers easier access in making website updates.
- Implementation of a new donor and contact management database platform called *CiviCRM*, allowing staff and volunteers easier access to donor and donation data, and allowing for implementation of a volunteer management system.
- A cloud based central document retention system, providing secure storage and WEB access by staff and volunteers to BGR's organizational documents and files.
- Documentation of BGR's standard operating procedures, ensuring mission critical procedures can be maintained in the event of volunteer or staff turnover.

We want BGR to be able combat chronic hunger for many, many years to come, and these initiatives, along with the generosity of our donors and volunteers, will enable BGR to perform its mission well into the future.

Thank you all for your continued support of BGR.

Tom Spies
Executive Director

2017 Spring Project Update

By Kim Behan and Carla Prater - Reports and photos have been coming in from our partner organizations with news about BGR projects funded in the Spring 2016. We will share details about these projects on our website, our Facebook page, the BGR Blog, our Annual Report and in future issues of Helping Hands. We can already see the wonderful impact of your generous donations in many ways, for instance:

- Haiti has suffered from numerous natural disasters since 2010, and we are happy to be able to help the Lamanjay Food Program continue to provide school lunches for students as well as neighborhood children in Port-Au-Prince.
- Hundreds of poor women farmers in Uttar Pradesh, India are receiving training, seeds, agricultural equipment and support from Farmers' Field Schools as they learn to improve their land, their skills, and their incomes using organic, sustainable practices.
- Fifty-nine young women from poor families in Sri Lanka have been able to pursue secondary and post-secondary education in fields ranging from civil engineering to information technology.
- In Nicaragua, 94 children ages 4-19 have received school uniforms, books, supplies and tuition as needed to attend schools in their areas.

The BGR 2017 Grant funding cycle has begun with the process of requesting applications from current grant recipients and new organizations. The proposals cover the four areas of our mission: food aid, education for children, women's livelihoods, and agricultural improvements. The proposals are under review by BGR board members, and will be discussed at our annual meeting in May. Decisions about funding will be communicated to our partner organizations after this meeting.

Along with our regular annual project grant funding BGR makes emergency relief grants when a catastrophic situation arises to organizations operating on the ground that have the capacity to respond in such situations. So far this year BGR has made \$58,000 in emergency grants. These grants went to relief organizations working (1) for flood victims in Assam, India, (2) in famine stricken areas in Eastern and Southern Africa, (3) for victims of Hurricane Matthew in Haiti, and (4) to provide aid in the Syrian Refugee crisis. We have recently made a \$10,000 grant to the World Food Program to be divided equally among four countries in crisis due to civil conflicts and environmental problems: South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and Nigeria.

We are deeply grateful for the enduring support of our donors and supporters. On behalf of all of us at Buddhist Global Relief and the women and children you have helped us serve, thank you for your extreme generosity!

"Kim Behan is the BGR Director of Programs and Carla Prater is BGR's Assistant Director"

The 6th Annual Concert to Feed the Hungry



By Dan Blake - On June 17, 2017 at 7 pm, Buddhist Global Relief will present the 6th annual Concert to Feed the Hungry, to be held at Middle Collegiate Church in Manhattan's Lower East Side. Benefiting from New York's rich cultural tapestry, the concert features a particularly diverse program of renowned artists. New York's premier Moroccan traditional ensemble *Innov Gnawa* will perform selections from a deep spiritual tradition that presents a clear vision of the ancient groove of North Africa. *Slavic Soul Party* conjures up a compelling mix of Balkan, Roma (Gypsy), soul and jazz influences that has made them one of New York's most beloved brass bands. The jazz saxophonist *David Liebman* was recently designated a Jazz

Master by the National Endowment for the Arts, both for his work with Miles Davis and Elvin Jones as well as for his own prolific genre-bending work going back to the 1970s. The concert will also feature emerging jazz vocalist *Arta Jekabsonė*, the recent winner of the 2016 Montreaux Jazz Vocal competition, who will join us via our developing partnership with The New School's School of Jazz.

Over the last few months it has become increasingly common to hear about "walls" and "bridges." Thanks to the work of Buddhist Global Relief and our compassionate artists, the Concert to Feed the Hungry puts forward a vision that looks beyond the narrow identities of culture and ethnicity toward a more peaceful world that can be enjoyed by all. To the extent that musicians can connect in performance to this aspiration for a better world, music intersects with the spiritual development of a compassionate heart that is intrinsic to our shared humanity. This is perhaps one way of understanding the legendary saxophonist John Coltrane's description of music as "the spiritual expression of what I am: my faith, my knowledge, my being."

The Concert to Feed the Hungry aims to provide a first-rate concert experience to the most diverse audience possible. To this end, we are offering a sliding scale general admission ticket price ranging from \$50 to a \$15 student ticket. We are also offering the public an opportunity to donate tickets to students and other community members who would otherwise find it hard to donate on their own toward a ticket. Proceeds from the concert will benefit the many wonderful projects sponsored by BGR, as well as a weekly soup kitchen run by Middle Church.

It is no accident that musicians often gravitate toward social justice causes in their work. Making music is indeed a bridge to compassionate action, something we hope to inspire on

June 17 with this most exciting and international program of award winning, internationally renowned artists!

6th Annual Concert to Feed the Hungry

June 17, 2017 at 7 pm

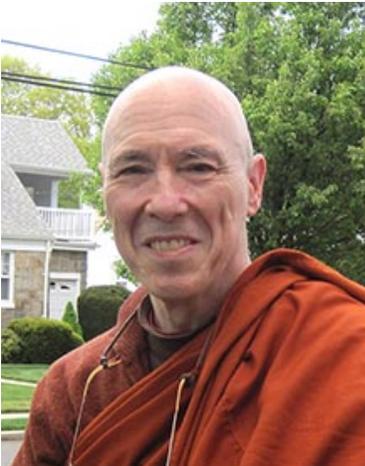
Middle Collegiate Church

112 - 2nd Avenue (at 7th Street)

Tickets and more information at <http://www.concerttofeedthehungry.org>

Dan Blake, a jazz saxophonist and BGR board member, has produced the Concert to Feed the Hungry since its inception in 2011.

Let's Mobilize on Behalf of the Climate, on Behalf of Life on Earth



By Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi - Among the many challenges facing us today, as both Americans and global citizens, none demands our attention more urgently than climate change. The global temperature is on the rise, and the consequences of a hotter climate are horrendous. We'll have to face unbearable heat waves, long droughts, more violent floods, and more deadly wild fires. Severe food shortages are predicted, swelling the numbers of the hungry, with many of the planet's most productive agricultural regions turned barren. Everyone on earth will be affected; no one will be spared the ravages of a changing climate.

There is no longer any doubt that it is human activity that's been spurring climate change. By our reckless over-reliance on fossil fuels we are heating up the earth's atmosphere, and it's up to us to avert full-scale devastation. Above all, we must make the shift toward a future powered by clean, renewable sources of energy. The means of making this shift are already available to us. The technology is here; the knowledge of how to apply it is at our disposal.

Yet, while the scientific consensus on the climate crisis is clear, what has been lacking is the political will to implement the necessary energy and environmental policies. To the contrary, the new administration has pledged to promote more pipelines, more reliance on coal power, and more extraction of fossil fuels. This will only increase the likelihood of full-scale catastrophe. Human civilization is in the crosshairs, and as people of conscience we should not stand by and watch from the sidelines.

To generate the political will to make the necessary changes, the nation's major environmental organizations have launched a [People's Climate Mobilization](#) that will culminate in a HUGE climate march in Washington D.C. on April 29th. At this march, hundreds of thousands of people will come together and walk shoulder to shoulder, demanding that we turn away from dirty energy and expedite the transition to a clean-energy economy. This should not be seen as a political issue—a conflict of "liberals" vs "conservatives"—since old style conservatives would be equally concerned to preserve a livable climate. It is, rather, an issue of protecting human civilization from the devastation that will follow if we don't act in time.

It is imperative that as many people as possible join this march, and as Buddhists it's crucial that we turn up in large numbers. Our faith commits us to the timeless values of compassion, peace, and wisdom, and in no area today are these values needed more badly than in inspired action to protect the climate. Out of love for all of life, from compassion for those who will suffer, we have to demonstrate our shared commitment to a sustainable future. We must come forward and march in unison with people from all over the world—marching for our own sake, for future generations, and on behalf of our voiceless brothers and sisters all around the world. It is only by acting together in a massive show of strength that we can bring into being a sustainable future.

Thank you, and I hope to see you at the march.

With blessings,
Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi
Chair, Buddhist Global Relief

For New Yorkers, Reserve Your Seat on the Buddhist Climate Bus Now!

To bring Buddhist participants from the greater New York area to Washington, BGR's affiliated Compassion NYC, New York Insight, and the New York chapter of the Buddhist Climate Action Network (BCAN) have rented buses from New York to D.C. Bus tickets are on sale now! They can be purchased online at compassionnyc.org. Buses are scheduled to leave at 6 am Saturday, April 29th, departing from 34th Street between 6th and 7th Avenue; they will return to New York City that evening at 8:30 pm. The march will begin at 12 noon. We will march on the

Capitol to drive home to Congress the need for immediate and effective action to prevent further climate degradation.

The bus trip will be a "Rolling Retreat," offering participants the chance to enjoy teachings by teachers from various Buddhist traditions. We will learn how to address the current climate crisis from a place of compassion and equanimity. We currently have three teachers scheduled for the retreat: Colin Beavan, Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara, and Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi. Colin is a Zen practitioner and teacher, a best-selling writer, a TV and movie personality, and an ardent defender of the environment. Roshi Enkyo is the abbess of the Village Zendo.

For questions about the march in English contact Regina Valdez at rvaldez@buddhistglobalrelief.org.

For questions in Chinese contact Sylvie Sun at sylviesun@buddhistglobalrelief.org.

Bus seats are limited, so, to be sure you get a place, make your reservations now!

How You Can Help BGR

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 info@buddhistglobalrelief.org for further information. As always, donations to BGR are welcome. You can donate by PayPal or credit card on the [BGR website](#), or by check mailed to:

Buddhist Global Relief
2020 Route 301
Carmel NY 10512, USA

Thank you for your help!