



MONGOLIA

Ven Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche



MONGOLIA REPORT

asral ngo: the need for a sustainable future

This year was my eighteenth visit to Mongolia since being invited by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to help with the reemergence of Buddhism and the growing social problems created by the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the intervening years, I have witnessed significant change in Mongolia, from the massive growth of the shanty districts, to the new wealth generated by the discovery of rich minerals mined by major international companies.

Western magazines report that Mongolia is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. This newfound wealth is apparent from the enormous level of construction sites and a burgeoning traffic that is causing gridlock in the city.

However, the reality is different; there is an ever widening gap between rich and poor. The people in the shanty districts continue to experience deep suffering, and the newfound wealth is not filtering down to those who need it most.

As the European economy continues to suffer, it has become more difficult to raise money to fund Asral's yearly budget. €50,000 is not a large amount of money considering what is included: running costs of Asral NGO and Kunjab Jampa Ling, my centres in Gaachuurt and Underschill, twenty-two people in full time employment; the Hot Meal, Medical and Family Aid projects, the Women's Prison, Juvenile Detention and Orphanage programmes, Gachuurt Vegetable and Kindergarten projects and Aid programmes.

This year, despite the enormous effort of my dedicated students, there were insufficient funds to meet Asral's yearly requirements. I went to Mongolia earlier than usual to see if it was possible to meet the shortfall. Generous students provided the finance and helped to avert a crisis. However, there is no guarantee that this support will be available in the coming years. It continues to be my strong wish that Asral NGO ultimately becomes self sustainable.





2012 was an election year in Mongolia and many politicians, MPs, local Governors, officials and dignitaries, including the First Mayor of the City came to see me. I was guest of honor at the opening ceremony of the Buddha's Relic Tour, and at the 90th Anniversary celebration of Bakula Rinpoche, Indian Ambassador to Mongolia during Communist times.



I was guest of honor at a reception given by the Indian Ambassador to Mongolia. The Abbot of Lam Rim Monastery invited me to participate in Mandala offerings, attended by hundreds of people. I gave television and radio interviews, and my work was the subject of a special documentary.



I visited the Medical Centre and distributed medicines to mothers and their malnourished babies, I met with the local Governor and community leaders, and visited families suffering with great difficulties and hardship in the shanty district.



I gave teachings in the Women's Prison, the Juvenile Detention Centre, the Orphanage and our local Kindergarten school. I visited the MIM felt making workshop in Ulaanbaatar. In Gaachuurt I met with the Governor, Hospital Director and Headmaster. I met with families participating in our vegetable growing project and visited the hospital.



I travelled to Ondershill in the Gobi Desert, meeting Governors, visiting the school, hospital, Hot Meal project and MIM workshop.

Many people came each day for blessings to the Centre and I gave public teaching to large numbers on Saturdays and Sundays. I gave Genyen vows to over 70 people on Saga Dawa, and was invited to many homes where I gave teachings to a number of large and extended families. I met with deaf and disabled children on Children's Day in Sukhbattar Sq. and distributed some gifts to each child present.

asral ngo



On behalf of the people in Mongolia that we support, I would like to express my very deepest gratitude to all of you who continue to help me in many different ways. I am indebted to all those people in Ireland, in Northern Ireland, in the United States and in many parts of the world who have continually supported my work over the years. I would like to especially acknowledge the continued support, contributions and commitment of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Asral NGO. Without your invaluable effort and commitment, the work could not continue. In the present economic difficulties, this support is more important than ever. Each year I witness the benefits of our continued efforts. I send to you my thanks, prayers and best wishes for your happiness and good health.

Panchen Ötrul Rinpoche



Hot Meal Project

30 children between the ages of six and sixteen are participating in the Hot Meal project in Asral NGO. Vulnerable children are supported with hot food every day to enable them to attend school, and are assisted with homework, extra tuition, disease prevention training, supplies, clothes, social activities and games. With funds from an Irish donor, Asral renovated and equipped the Hot Meal kitchen and classroom. Of the 30 children participating:

- 18 are girls and 12 are boys
- 11 children come from parents who are divorced.
- 4 new children joined the project this year.
- 3 children have parents who are deceased.
- 3 children have lost one of their parents.



Medical Centre

As a result of its tireless efforts to improve the health of the most vulnerable in the community, Asral received the award of Best Health Supporting Organisation of Ulaanbaatar City.

Over 140 people have received medical care from Asral NGO since 2005, at a cost of 7,800,000 tgs. Asral and the Medical Centre collaborate on;



- Medication to more than 70 people.
- Public health training.
- World Aids Day, training in Aids prevention.
- Disease prevention.
- The importance of hygiene.
- Training of volunteers.
- Care of the elderly at home.



The doctors indicated that stomach diseases will increase as a result of soil pollution. Cancer is increasing as are strokes and high blood pressure in 50 - 70 year olds. Babies still suffer from malnutrition. This year there was a critical outbreak of Hepatitis A.



Gaachuurt

Asral NGO provided five different kinds of seeds from Ireland, including cabbages and squash. 536 kilos of seed potatoes were donated by Asral Board on the 13th of May.

28 families received 22 kilos of seed potatoes
8 families and disabled persons received tools
3 families received water trolleys
2 children, one disabled, participated in the project



This autumn participants harvested:

2.6 tons of potatoes
70 kg of cabbages
75 kg of carrots
110 kg of cucumber
20 kg of onions
30 kg of turnip

Salad greens, peppers and squash were also harvested.



After discussion with the local Governor, school and hospital, Asral NGO received funds from Ireland to build a greenhouse for a vegetable growing project aimed specially for children. The Governor agreed to provide land and Asral's vegetable project trainer will work with school and hospital staff to develop this project aimed at providing a sustainable supply of fresh organic vegetables.



Kindergarten

There is one kindergarten to cater for 1,000 children between the ages of 2 and 6. However, there is space for only 400 children, on a first come first served basis. There is a 10% fall off, usually younger 2 - 3 year old children, in winter. Each child is funded by 1,100 tgs from the Government, although the real cost is 1,340 tgs.



Because of the numbers limitation 600 children do not have access to kindergarten education, causing problems entering primary level at age six.

90% are from the ger district

There are two 24 hour classes where children stay overnight. These children are usually children of single parents, orphans, or have parents who work night shifts.

70 children attend 5 days per week.



Asral supports 32 of the poorest children, providing clothes, stationary, school equipment, winter play area, sanitation and renovated classrooms.

The new Director of the kindergarten moved these children from a cold and poorly heated, poorly renovated room downstairs to an upstairs, newly insulated room that was brightly redecorated and furnished.



Supporting Children

Asral cooperates with the City Municipality Special Training Centre which provides services for orphans, children whose parents have disappeared, children whose parents are unable to look after them for various reasons, and street children.

Asral distributed healthy food to 90 children from the ages of six to eighteen. Of the 90 children, 30 are orphans. The children, many of whom were living on the street, are trained with vocational skills in sewing, carpentry and practical skills that will enable them to achieve a livelihood when they leave.



Most street children come from the ger districts; at one time up to 300 children were living on the street. Most come from broken homes, divorced parents, families with no employment, mothers who can't look after them, parents who suffer from alcoholism; all problems that Asral NGO is committed to prevent.



Woman's Prison

There is only one prison for women for all of Mongolia housing over 600 prisoners, of which 50% are Buddhist

60 -70 women attend monthly Dharma classes given by Ueli Minder from Asral. Over 110 women attended Zonkhapa Day. Asral donated 50 pairs of winter shoes to long term prisoners and distributed prayer beads to 30 prisoners.



The Governor expressed his gratitude for Asral's work, indicating the benefits of Buddhist philosophy, taught on a regular basis by Kunjab Jampa Ling, in assisting women who feel despair and a loss of hope. Asral distributed some gifts and toiletries to all women in the prison.



Juvenile Detention Centre

Asral NGO, along with Ueli Monder and psychologist Myamarjargal, visit the juvenile detention centre twice monthly. In total 234 young offenders aged 14 - 18 attended their classes.

Asral is developing new approaches to working with these youths, using modern counseling methods to support them on an individual basis.



Asral also supports the development of hobbies and skills, co-operating with well known Khurd rock band and Ueli Minder, who donated three guitars for the prisoners use. Guitar classes are given to the youths by Mr.Otgonbayar, famous guitarist member of the band.



Aid Programme

Asral NGO provides emergency support, particularly food and clothes. B.Uuganbayar donated 3 tons of potatoes for the poorest of families and for the Hot Meal project.

Since June 2012 Asral NGO distributed food to 94 individuals and distributed clothes to 96 individuals, including children.

Asral, in cooperation with Jampa Ling Ireland, implements a sponsorship programme, mainly for vulnerable children and students, supporting them with tuition fees, medication and stationary costs.

In 2012 a total of 19 children and students and 4 sick people received sponsorship. Most of the children who benefit live in the ger districts of UB, where there are significant problems of water access, health assistance and food supply.



MIM Project

Made In Mongolia (MIM) Project is a Mongolia-Irish voluntary partnership initiated by Panchen Otrul Rinpoche as part of Asral's training programme. All profits from the initiative go to help women generate income to enable them to support their families.

Currently 13 women are employed fulltime and 4670 felt and embroidery products, including 2386 pairs of slippers, were produced in 2012. MIM participated in the national exhibition 'Science and Technology 2012', organised by the Ministry of Education and Science.





A new on-line shop www.madeinmongolia.net was launched in Oct. after considerable preparation, and is already beginning to generate sales. Products have been shipped to Ireland and a marketing person employed to service and promote the online business. The new updated website has been developed with an exclusive, beautifully designed range of high quality felt products.

www.madeinmongolia.net



Onderschill

The well, purification system and solar powered energy provided by funds from Ireland and the Dutch Government, continues to improve the health of the local community and provides employment for one man.

Asral met with local governor, doctor and school director. The hospital's maternity wing, built with support from Electric Aid Ireland, continues to help women who are pregnant.

20 children benefit from the hot meal project, receiving warm clothes, stationary and toiletries.

The MIM felt project in Onderschill is currently employing 9 people full time.

Asral is seeking funding to build a new building to house all of Asral's projects in Onderschill.

