



Rokpa Canada

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2005

Rokpa's Twenty-fifth Anniversary

1980~ 2005



Rokpa's main work continues to be in the areas of education, health care and relief of hunger in the Tibetan Homeland and Nepal. However, the extent of our support is now expanding in Africa, particularly in South Africa and Zimbabwe where much work is being done to assist people who are suffering from the ravages of the AIDS epidemic.

What we are - A non-profit organisation, Rokpa helps and supports people in need irrespective of their religion, nationality or cultural background. Rokpa's name is taken from the Tibetan word meaning "to help" or "to serve".

What we do - the majority of our activities focus on providing education and training, though health and training in health care is an important aspect of our work. The effectiveness of these activities is reinforced by emergency support for the destitute, the old and the sick, start-up funds for business and a small number of environmental projects.

Who we have helped - To date over 10,000 people have received direct assistance from Rokpa, whilst many more will have been helped by Rokpa trained teachers and health workers.

Scope of our Work - Rokpa has been in operation since 1980 and initially worked to support Tibetans in India and Nepal. Since then our projects have expanded to include the Tibetan Homeland, Zimbabwe and South Africa. We have over 100 projects for Tibetans in their homeland, 4 major projects in Nepal, 5 in Zimbabwe, and 2 in South Africa. Other projects are

based in Belgium, Poland, Spain and the UK. The revenue for these projects is raised and distributed at a local level.

Funding - Revenue is raised by 13 branches in 12 different countries, headed by Rokpa International in Switzerland, through which all funds for Asia and Africa are distributed. Funding comes from a wide variety of sources, including private individuals, business organisations and charitable trusts, as well as local, national and international governmental bodies. Rokpa International and all its branches hold charitable status within their own countries and have the same or similar constitutions.

Volunteer Staff - The majority of fundraising and administration is carried out by volunteers, making our work very cost-effective. Each branch has a management committee, often supported by other volunteers who work for Rokpa on a regular basis. In 2004, there were over 70 volunteers involved in raising funds worldwide.

Targeted Help - From our experience, meeting needs is best achieved by working through the local community and by promoting self-sufficiency. Projects are selected on the basis of helping the maximum number of the poorest people and providing assistance that directly helps people to improve their economic conditions.

Project Partners - Rokpa always works with local government authorities, local businesses, community leaders and individual volunteers.

www.rokpa.ca

Historical Highlights of ROKPA INTERNATIONAL

- 1980** Establishment of ROKPA INTERNATIONAL. First activities in India helping Tibetan refugees through sponsorship.
- 1982** Registration of ROKPA INTERNATIONAL as a taxfree charitable organisation in Switzerland.
- 1983** Dr. Akong Tulku Rinpoche returns to Tibet for the first time after fleeing in 1959; he is deeply moved by the situation in his home country.
- 1983 to 1989** Dr. Akong Tulku Rinpoche deals extensively with local government officials in order to provide direct support and help in Tibet.
- 1985** Establishment of ROKPA United Kingdom.
- 1986** Establishment of ROKPA Germany and ROKPA Belgium.
- 1988** Establishment of ROKPA Netherlands.
- 1990** Commencement of the first projects in Tibet managed and monitored by ROKPA. Establishment of ROKPA France, ROKPA Austria, ROKPA Spain and ROKPA India. Establishment of a ROKPA soup kitchen in Kathmandu/Nepal during the coldest months in winter. Street children are picked up and placed in local boarding schools.
- 1991** Establishment of the ROKPA Clothes Depot. Establishment of ROKPA Canada, ROKPA USA, ROKPA Italy and ROKPA South Africa.
- 1992** Establishment of ROKPA Zimbabwe.
- 1994** First visit of ROKPA members to Tibet.
- 1995** Establishment of ROKPA Poland.
- 1996** The ROKPA Children's Home is established offering 50 children a home and education.
- 1997** First ROKPA Canada medical clinic in Yushu.
- 1999** Establishment of ROKPA Switzerland.
- 2001** ROKPA INTERNATIONAL begins support of a family program in Zimbabwe.
- 2002** ROKPA Canada brings six Tibetan students to Vancouver to study English. Akong Rinpoche's first visit to Vancouver. Establishment of ROKPA Finland.
- 2003** Yushu Orphanage School graduates first medical school class. All of the students go on the medical college in Hainan.
- 2004** Dartsedo school graduates medical class. Rokpa Canada's seventh annual clinic in Yushu.

Tibetan Homeland

With most of our work being the support of children through education, it is good to see how positively this is developing. The crafts and skills training we introduced to the schools we support has been a big success, enabling children to earn good money. A new development is the building of greenhouses at some schools. This is making vegetables available for a large part of the year, contributing to better health, and teaching the children a new skill. Other schools will be encouraged to follow suit.

Unemployment continues to be a big problem for Tibetans, so our aim is to make higher education more accessible for Tibetan children so they can compete for office and government jobs. Knowledge of the English language is becoming ever more important in the job market. This gives impetus to our efforts to send English teachers to the schools we support.

Since 1995, we have worked continuously with local governments to plant trees in parts of Kanze where de-forestation had taken place for several years. Now, a number of areas are under preservation orders that involve the active protection of endangered wildlife, plants and herbs.

Why Tibetans need help

Tibetans live in one of the poorest areas of the world. Most of the country is very high, with extremes of cold in winter, making many areas unsuitable for crop growing. A high proportion of peoples' income has to be devoted to simply keeping warm. Outside of



the main cities, the majority of the population is made up of nomadic herders or small scale farmers.

Tibetans are prepared to work hard if offered the skills and resources to protect and improve their communities. Rokpa aims to help them to help themselves. With a renewed pride in their language and culture, they will grow in strength and provide the ideal environment for sustainable economic development.

Most of the Rokpa supported projects are located in the north-east of the Tibetan Homeland: Qinghai, western Sichuan, northern Yunnan and western Kansu, many in remote and sparsely populated regions.

Initiating a Project

Our role is to encourage sustainable economic self-sufficiency, with a strong emphasis on using the Tibetan culture in this role. This is achieved by facilitating the creation and continuation of autonomous projects that are

established in accordance with local requirements.

Requests for projects arise from communally agreed needs, and are usually initiated by a village leader or someone with extensive local knowledge. Rokpa shares the funding and responsibilities with local authorities and local communities. Most projects are small scale in response to the communities' most pressing needs.

Project Partners

Usually, local governments supply land and buildings, or the capital needed to renovate or build. Local communities provide services such as labour, food or firewood, and more recently, Tibetans who have benefited from the more open economy, are providing revenue. Rokpa's role is to meet running costs, such as teachers and doctors' salaries, living expenses for the students, medicines, and medical equipment.

Projects are run by local project leaders who write reports, take photographs, and are guided by our area representatives. They also receive an annual visit from Rokpa's President, Dr Akong Tulku Rinpoche.

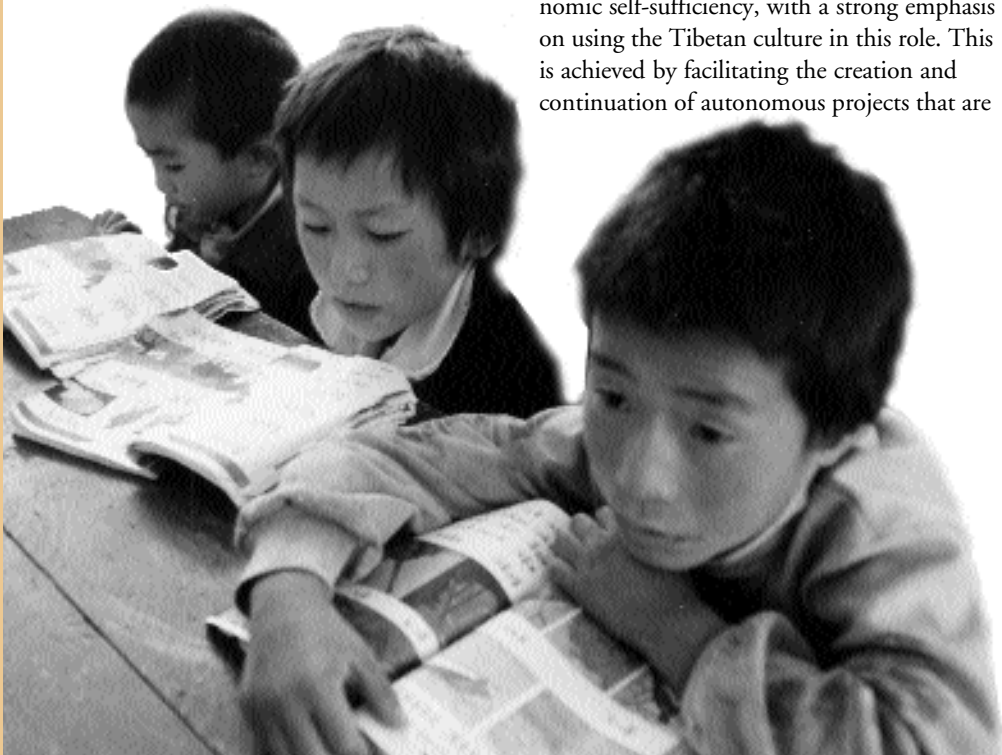
HEALTH CARE

According to the World Bank, in Tibetan areas there is only one qualified doctor to each 16,830 of the population and the infant mortality is 147 per 1,000 live births. One in ten mothers die in childbirth.

Rokpa is currently supporting 9 health centres and one medicine factory. The numbers of patients who received medical care during 2001 is more than 38,000. Many Tibetans are unable to pay, so would not receive any medical help at all if it were not for our sponsorship. Traditional Tibetan medicine is commonly used. Made mainly from locally available natural herbs and imported ingredients it has proved to be an effective treatment for many generations.

As a direct effect of the 10 medical training programmes Rokpa has funded since 1992, many more rural communities have had healthcare since 1999. The 000 students who have now graduated had agreed to return to help their own people and with local health department funding for medicines, over 000 new clinics have now opened with doctors working in pairs. This has increased the need for Tibetan medicine and pill making machines have been funded at 00 clinics, these becoming the suppliers for large areas.

One training programme teaching a short course of Western medicine has produced



170 graduates. These were supplied with "doctors bags" by a generous donor and this has enabled them to help thousands in their communities.

Rokpa hopes to support the building of a Healthcare Centre for treatment of skin diseases, rheumatism, arthritic problems and spinal difficulties, by using the hot sulphur springs of the Kanze region. It will also generate incomes for the county which is one of the poorest areas in Tibet.

PRINTING

The ancient method of printing with wood blocks is still carried out at Dege and Palyul, western Sichuan. The Dege Library is becoming well known as the oldest and largest library of its kind and is open to the public. Rokpa has been supporting the printing of rare texts at both these centres for a number of years. However, making texts - both monastic and medical - more readily available to the general public is also our aim, and a number of other printing projects

using more modern methods are being funded. One of these will, for the first time, make course books for upper middle school students available in Tibetan.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS

Tree felling has taken place over a number of decades in Tibetan areas and there has been subsequent erosion and flooding. Climatic changes are causing further difficulties to the nomadic way of life and hunting has led to the extinction of some species and endangered others. The introduction of non-biodegradable products implies the teaching of new environmental habits.

Rokpa supports projects that set up tree nurseries, plant trees, employ local people as rangers and educate villagers about their environment.

Many endangered species of wildlife and plants are being protected, as well as areas of land considered sacred and in danger of being used for mining or other exploitation. There are also plans for the cultivation of

medical herbs. Rokpa supported schools now include environmental studies in their curriculum and it is part of the training at a teacher training college.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Most rural Tibetans live far below the absolute poverty level as defined by the World Health Organisation. In May 1998 the annual average income in Qinghai was estimated at \$40.

The young, the old and the sick are the most vulnerable in any society. The number of orphans among the Tibetan population is very high as through lack of healthcare many adults die young from disease and accidents. With funds for orphans and single parents and a policy of prioritising orphans to enter our schools, we do our best to help.

A chronic and painful inflammation of the joints, called Kashin Beck disease, affects Tibetans over a large area of the north east. A number of sufferers are supported at an especially built home at Cha Den.



Nepal

The economic and political situation in Nepal continues to be very disrupted. This resulted in our Soup Kitchen in Kathmandu being in even greater demand this year. The larger numbers of destitute people now living on the streets has heightened the need for other forms of help too. The building of the new children's home, planned for later this year and the growth of our craft workshops for single mothers will go towards helping this situation. Our first "street children" who were taken in to the existing Home are now happy, hard working pupils at their colleges, with high ambitions.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is experiencing a serious AIDS epidemic as well as a political and economic breakdown. Our presence here is still small with the work concentrating on the support of mothers affected by HIV and help for the destitute in the poorest high-density areas in Harare. There is a long way to go, but this is a very positive start.

South Africa

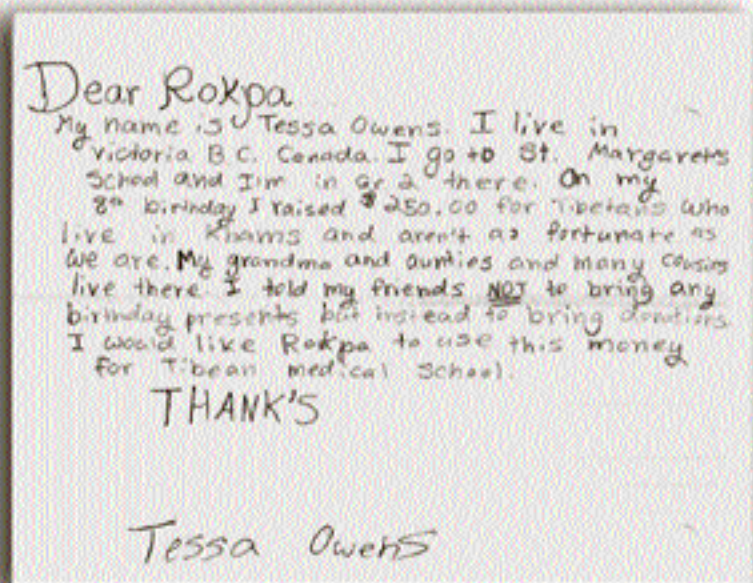
AIDS and deprivation are endemic in much of the southern African region. Our work started in 1995 with a soup kitchen in Johannesburg. The project also performs outreach work amongst street children together with children's organisations. The medium term goal for street children is to give them training and help them find work. To this end land has been purchased for the establishment of a training centre where former street children can learn crafts and skills and get the support and care they need.



Are you Interested in Volunteering?

Rokpa Canada has need for volunteers in a number of areas. Volunteers can help with our public events. Our newsletter and annual report needs people with writing or graphic layout skills as well as people simply to help with getting the mailing out. Physicians, dentists and other health workers are needed every year for the Rokpa Canada clinic in Yushu. English teachers are needed at the Yushu orphanage school and other locations in Tibet for periods starting from one month. If you have civil engineering or maternity nursing skills there are volunteer positions available in Tibet. If you want to help, just call or email us.

Rokpa Canada would also like to thank the following organizations for their support:



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HOW TO HELP

Name
 Address City Province
 Postal Code Phone E-mail
 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 or \$.....

Please direct my donation as follows: To wherever the money is needed the most (undesignated donation)
 To the following area or project (please specify): _____

Please note: Rokpa Canada uses all donations for project funding only. No donated funds are used for local administration costs or fundraising. To minimize costs, we encourage your donation via personal cheque or cash. However, you may donate using a credit card via our www.rokpa.ca web site link to www.CanadaHelps.org. Thank you.

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