



L.P. 19 MARCH 1991, N. 5

## **Development Cooperation**

**DIRECT PROJECTS OF THE AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF  
BOLZANO**

# **ELDERLY SUPPORT PROJECT**

**AIMED TO CREATE A SUPPORT NETWORK TO  
AID THE ELDERLY EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS OF  
2015 IN THE LANGTANG VALLEY – RASUWA  
DISTRICT NEPAL**



**Rysang in the village of Thangshap 3250 metres.**

The project is put forward by the non-recognized voluntary association, Jiulè' & Namastè

seated in Bolzano at the Library Culture del Mondo in via Macello 50, tel. nr. 0471/974643

email: [mail@bibimondeo.it](mailto:mail@bibimondeo.it)

The association was founded in Bolzano on the 13/12/2018 by 10 associates, all employed as volunteers.

A description of the activities, carried out by the members of the association, can be found in the attached document n. 1.

The president of the association is:

Luciano Casagrande, Caldaro (BZ), via Barleit 5, mobile phone nr. 3395027181.

Vice-president is:

Luciano Guariento, via Visitazione 6/A, mobile phone nr. 3287628009.

Areas of assistance:

multi-sectorial, educational/health/economic development.

The "Elderly Support Project" will be carried out by people who live in Kathmandu and in the Langtang valley. These people have formed an association:

**Mendo Family Foundation**, voluntary association, constituent act n. 208334/075/076.

Founded in Kathmandu on the 07/02/2019.

The legal seat has place in Kathmandu, district 26, Jhyatha, Thamel Nepal.

President: Choeney Tamang, mobile phone nr. +977 980-8228150

Pasang Bhuti Tamang is an inspiring and tireless promoter of this association. She was born in the Langtang village and lived with her family, helping them to work the fields and tending to yaks. At the age of eight, thanks to the support of a German couple trekking in the valley, she had the possibility to go to school.

*“I came to Kathmandu and lived in a hostel for many years. I was the happiest person on earth when I got a pen, notebooks and a school bag. I did not know any English or Nepali. My mother tongue was Tibetan. But I managed to learn quickly.”*

Now she lives in Spain. She lost her mother and the entire village to the earthquake of 2015 in Nepal. Since then she is actively engaged in helping the survivors. She created an association “Langtang Disaster Relief Fund” with the purpose of collecting funds in order to help the people of Langtang.

- June 2015 – artisans workshop for the women of Langtang.

- December 2015 – she coordinated the distribution of the fund, raised by the Spanish National Police Association, to the areas of Rasuwa and Langtang.
- April 2016 – she organized a music festival, in the Garcia street of Barcelona, in order to raise funds for the people who were injured during the earthquake.
- October 2016 – she coordinated the project of the Spanish Fire-fighter volunteers, whose purpose was the purchase of food and of basic necessities for the people.
- January 2017 – First visit, with the Nepalreconstruction group (Bolzano), to the Langtang valley in order to distribute the collected funds and to finance the rebuilding projects.
- She activated a network of contacts in Kathmandu with the purpose of finding work for the widows.
- She began the sponsoring, on behalf of European families, for 10 orphan children of the Langtang valley.

Those actively involved in the project are:

**Guariento Luciano**, educator, manager and coordinator of the project.

**Casagrande Luciano**, teacher, president of the association Julè&Namastè, supervisor of the project.

**Guariento Emil**, student, management of the relationships with partners of the “Elderly Support Project” in Nepal.

**Pasang Bhutti Tamang**, responsible for the Marriot’s International reception in Malaga (Spain). Founder of the “Langtang Disaster Relief Fund” association in 2015, and



founder of the Mendo Family Foundation. Supervisor and coordinator of the work of those involved in the Langtang valley.

**Choeney Tamang**, president of the Mendo Family Foundation, yoga teacher, hiking guide in Nepal. She also manages the requests of the visits to the elderly. She collects, through interviews, the needs of the elderly object of the project. She repeats the interviews every six months, in order to document the effectiveness of the various assistances.

**Nima Tamang**, porter in the mountain and trekking expeditions. She is responsible for the monthly transport and distribution of the supplies, from the town of Syabrubensi to the Langtang valley. She visits the elderly and lists their needs, she subsequently activates the resources available in the valley.

**Gyalbu Tamang**, responsible for the state cheese factory in Kiangjing. Proprietor and manager of the Tibet Guest House in Kiangjing. He is responsible for the monthly transport and distribution of the supplies, from the town of Sybrubensi to the Langtang valley. He visits the elderly and lists their needs, he subsequently activates the resources available in the valley.

## **5. Political and socio-economic context**

**Nepal is a federal parliamentary republic. The Himalayan nation became a republic following the abolition of the monarchy on May 28 2008. This political structure was established after a civil war which lasted ten years. The emergency of the national crisis, caused by the devastation of**

**the earthquake from the previous spring, drove the parliament to approve the new constitution in July 2015. Nepal became an “independent State, indivisible, secular sovereign and a democratic republic”. With the Constitution of 2015 Nepal became a federation of 7 states, each of which with its own legislation and its own Prime Minister.**

**More than 100 recorded ethnic groups live together and 123 different languages and numerous dialects are spoken in the nation. The Hindu religion consists of 90% of the population, followed by Buddhism (of the Vajraian branch of Tibetan origin), Muslim and Catholic.**

**The Langtang valley is situated in the Rasuwa district and has approximately 50.000 inhabitants. Dhunche is the capital. The district is part of the Bagmati area in the central region. The territory is subdivided in 18 Committees for the development of the villages (VDC).**

**The district belongs geographically to the Himalayan mountainous area called Parbat. The north-eastern area of the district is part of the Langtang National Park.**

**The main ethnic group that can be found in the district is the Tamang.**

**The Langtang National Park is the fourth national park of Nepal. It was founded in 1976 as the first Himalayan national park. The reasons, which brought this area to be identified as being in urgent need of protection and preservation are: the presence of large forests, in need of preservation, fauna and wildlife particularly rich and unique (snow leopard, red**

panda, Himalayan vulture), the great biological variety of plants (the park develops itself from a height of 1200 metres at the pastures of Yala Karka of 5300 metres), the water resources and the peculiarities of the culture and religion.

It is believed that, centuries ago, the people of Langtang were nomads and that they moved from Tibet. They settled in Langtang, unaware that the territory belonged to Nepal. Afterwards, the government of Nepal granted them Nepali citizenship and gave them the last name *Tamang*. In the Tibetan language *Tamang* indicates a warrior who goes into battle on horseback. Since the People's Republic of China occupation in 1959, the Langtang valley has become a refuge for the many nomads escaping the war. To this day the people of Langtang keep the Tibetan culture and language alive, and follow Buddhism as a philosophy of life.

For the mountain people the main source of life is agriculture, with annual harvests. The primary agricultures are cereals (wheat, barley), vegetables, potatoes.

An additional source of life is livestock. As a population of Tibetan nomad origins, their lives evolve around the yak, also called the grumpy ox.

A rather curious animal, unpredictable and halfway domesticated. The yak has been a source of sustenance for centuries, providing meat (only if dead due to natural causes), wool, milk and it is used of as beast of burden.

In 1954 a group from Switzerland started a cheese factory (the first in Himalaya) in the Kiangjing Gumpa village. Up until



then the non-consumed milk was discarded in a short time. It is estimated that, before the earthquake, the herds amounted up to 600 heads and that there were 36 shepherd families living in the valley. Approximately 600 litres of milk were worked daily, which produced around 60 kg of cheese. The milk-makers were workers who brought the milk daily from the alpine pastures to the Kiangjing Gumpa cheese factory. The earthquake of 2015 caused the death of 15 shepherd families and approximately 400 yaks. At present the 21 remaining shepherd families, continuing this activity, milk the yaks and make the cheese on location. The cheese is then brought to the cheese factory. The cheese factory was also destroyed and the people working there died. The inheritance was taken by the son of the former cheese-makers, Gyalpu. Thanks to the Swiss Confederation, which rebuilt the cheese factory, he is slowly fully and actively restarting this important form of economy.

Agriculture has been the primary source of income and sustenance until the valley was opened to tourism, which expanded due to the promotion of trekking routes. It is a high altitude agriculture, many years of work have been necessary to free the fields of rocks and to render them fertile. Yak droppings have always been the only fertilizer used. The crops are: Tibetan wheat, barley, mustard, potatoes, vegetables. The earthquake of 2015 has devastated the fields, covering them with rocks and rendering them useless. Only a few small parts of fields can still be worked, yet they scarcely suffice to sustain a few families in the summer.

**As a consequence of the earthquake a territory, formerly safeguarded by shepherds before the earthquake, is now invaded by boars which frequently ruin the few cultivated fields.**

**As a consequence of the trekking expansion in the Langtang National Park, tourism has become the primary source of income in the Langtang valley. After the trek to the base of Mount Everest and the Annapurna trek, the Langtang National Park remains the third most frequented destination by hikers. For a few decades now, tourism has become the source of income for young generations. Nevertheless, the elderly remain nomads and continue to work the fields.**

## **6. Birth of the project**

The idea to start the project (Elderly Support Project) emerged from the visits to the Langtang valley, made during the winters of 2017 and 2018.

The aim of these visits was to finance the building of houses and of pastoralism, which were greatly damaged by the earthquake of 2015. These projects were started and organized by the initiative “Nepalreconstruction” from Bolzano, which is now merged in the association Julè&Namastè.

During these journeys, made with people who live in the Langtang valley and who followed the practical realization of the projects, we learned to know the reality of this community of elderly who survived the earthquake.

Around 300 people died in Langtang, the destruction of villages, forests, communication routes and work activities

related to tourism, agriculture and pastoralism, was enormous. Moreover, the second economic activity was related to the yak livestock and to the production of cheese products made in the cheese factory in Kiangjing (first cheese factory in the Himalaya, started in 1954). Furthermore, many survivors emigrated to villages outside the valley or to Kathmandu, where they found greater working and housing possibilities.

Slowly, after four years since the earthquake, houses are being rebuilt in the villages, tourism is again bringing people and economic resources to the valley and agriculture and pastoralism are again beginning to slowly flourish.

The people most affected by the earthquake were the elderly, as a consequence of the death of family members and of the following emigration of their children and grandchildren. Moreover, these people, mostly Tibetan exiles used to a solitary mountain life and greatly characterised by Buddhist practices and rituals, experienced the forced evacuation to Kathmandu as a type of imprisonment. Some of them have not been found, others committed suicide, those who remained were the first to return to Langtang. Here, they used some remained materials from their destroyed villages in order to build makeshift accommodations, some of which were gradually made more secure and habitable. However, these accommodations still retain an austere appearance.

Before the earthquake, the care of the elderly was guaranteed by the families and by the community residing in the villages. A network of caring existed, based on acquaintances and on decade old rites. Now, after the death of many residents, the

emigration of relatives and the immigration of new people who invest in tourism, the help for the elderly stopped.

Undoubtedly the network of caring will be rebuilt in the course of years. However, now and in the near future it is necessary to intervene in order to provide support and help where needed.

During the first journey, in the winter of 2017, we met some of the elderly. The same elderly, met again in 2018, showed an evident suffering caused by a lack of care and attention.

These elderly people, displaced in six different communities of the valley, live alone, often at the outskirts of the villages.

During our visits we also ascertained that some of them did not wash themselves for days. The firewood, to warm up and to cook, was almost finished and they run short on food. Additionally, the water containers were almost empty.

In February 2019 the manager of the project in Kathmandu interviewed 27 elderly, for whom the project is intended.

The recounts depict these elderly people as a community whose life evolved around agriculture and around yaks. This brought them to lead a nomadic life in the alpine pastures, depending on the season. They are still attached to this kind of work and lifestyle. However, they find themselves in a situation of great difficulty, as the earthquake killed many yaks and as the fields were destroyed by landslides. They tend, therefore, only to a few animals and cultivate small plots of land. Additionally, they could not rebuild their main houses.

**7. The aims of the project are, therefore, two:**

## 1-The assessment of the various states of need:

- Observe the general health condition of the people, the most urgent health needs (injuries, lesions, hygiene...),
- Relational / Social / religious needs (narrate, participate to the community's encounters, go to the monastery for the Buddhist rituals...),
- Food needs and the restock of provisions (rice, vegetables, sugar, flour, water, spices...),
- Provide them with the ceremonial dress in occasion of the Losar, the Tibetan New Year's Eve, which is the main festivity for the Tibetan communities. This dress holds an important role of identity and connection to the religious Tibetan traditions and of belonging to the community.

2-The improvement of the life of the elderly residing in the villages of Thangshap, Chamki, Langtang, Mudu, Sidum and Kiangjing. This objective will be achieved first and foremost through the assessment of the physical state and needs, of the food, housing and psychological needs and of the participation to the elderly people's social life.

## **8. Assessment of the various states of needs**

The assessment occurs with regular visits, made by the collaborators of the project who, by visiting the elderly people in the huts and houses where they live, converse with them by asking questions. By conversing they establish a relationship which allows them to assess the extent of their need/s. First and foremost by evaluating their health condition, by observing the deambulation, the presence of injuries or lesions.

Moreover, through the observation of the domestic environment, they assess if it is adequate for an acceptable living condition. If the supplies of water and firewood suffice, if the environment is not wet or too damp (seepage of water through the roof during the monsoon seasons), if the mattresses and the blankets are clean, if the pantry is stocked with supplies of recurring usage (rice, flour, sugar, tea, spices...).

### **9. The manner in which the aim will be achieved**

The primary method, in order to achieve the aim to improve the life condition of the elderly in the Langtang valley, will be to regularly visit them in their huts. These visits will be made by two inhabitants who reside at the village of Kiangjing and who are well known and appreciated, for their profession and authority, by the community. Every month, in order to buy supplies, they go to the village of Syabrubensi (a day's walk), where the road, which connects Kathmandu to the border with Tibet (20 kilometres away), passes through. The material will then be loaded on donkeys and brought through the Langtang valley. In a two day's walk they will visit the elderly in order to distribute the established amount of supplies. This factor will allow them to easily enter the houses and will permit the elderly to clarify what they need and what they lack of. The collected information will be forwarded to Kathmandu, where Chooney will see to the purchase of the necessary supplies and that the elderly people receive them.

Moreover, if necessary, in case of needs connected to the maintenance of huts/houses, to the care of the yaks and to the



harvest, the people who will make the visits will be able to activate the immediate help of the community.

In case of significant illnesses, they will organize transport to Kathmandu or, for minor problems, they will activate the resources available in the valley. At the village of Mandu there is a Nepali government building, managed by an Australian ONG, which performs basic health care activities for locals and for tourists.

## **10. Support areas**

The project is resolved to give support in three main areas.

**Health:** To point out health, as well as suffering, related discomforts and illnesses. In time, thus, reduce and mitigate pain and the development of illnesses. Many fear and worry about physical problems, as they are alone and lacking of help.

**The relational aspect:** For some solitude has become a problem. Fears and anguish are eased by speaking about them and by telling someone. Therefore, as these visits are recurring and regular, in time we expect that they will bring people more self-assurance.

**Food supplies:** Food supplies have become a problem for all the elderly. The earthquake stopped the sources of income which derived from the yaks and from the cultivation of fields. Moreover, being elderly, they are not able to carry out heavy physical work. With more secure and more regular food storages, we expect an increased serenity and physical well-being.

## **11. The choice of the elderly community**

The community of elderly, chosen as beneficiary of the “Elderly Support Project”, is located in the Langtang valley and is composed of 46 people. They live in the villages of Thangshap, Chamki, Langtang, Mundu, Sindum and Kiangjing located between 3200 and 4000 metres. All those involved in the project were once farmers and yak shepherds. They all had a main house to rely on, thus a place of their own, comfortable, near some fields where to grow wheat, barley, potatoes and vegetables. The earthquake took all this from them. Many still conduct these activities, however in a very limited way, as most of the yaks were lost and most of the fields destroyed, ruined by landslides.

Through a survey, made by those who follow the project in the valley (documented in the attached interviews), the elderly people have been selected for the following characteristics:

- Between 60 and elder than 80 years;
- They live alone or with their consort;
- They still conduct activities related to farming and agriculture;
- Children and grandchildren live in other villages or in Kathmandu;
- They do not receive economic help from their children and are not looked after in case of a inability;
- They are not related, in someway, to tourism. Thus, they do not make any income from the selling of tea, meals, lodgings and from porter activitiet.

This is the list of the people who will benefit from the support:

**THANGSHAP VILLAGE MT. 3250**

1. Au Babu
2. Laure Dawa
3. Karyang Lama
4. Chokki Tamang
5. Renzin Chusang
6. Sonam Gyalzen
7. Tseden Tamang

**MUNDU VILLAGE MT 3700**

16. Nima Lhamu
17. Pejung Lama
18. Tashi Gyalbu
19. Mem Lobsang
20. Ibi Pemba
21. Gombo Lama
22. Lhabzen Tamang
23. Tharchen Tamang
24. Tshering Dawa
25. Mem Dorje
26. Hyul Dolma
27. Mundu Dolma
28. Dolma Lama
29. Kar Gyalmu
30. Phurbu Zema
31. Fokto Tamang

**CHAMKI VILLAGE MT.3300**

8. Tsin Dhindu
9. Ibi Tshering
10. Hangyur Tamang

**LANGTANG VILLAGE MT. 3500**

11. Zisingang Dawa
12. Nima Repa
13. Ibi Chenga
14. Phurbu Ghyaktum
15. Gyalsang Tamang

**SINDUM VILLAGE MT. 3750**

32. Au Nima
33. Ibi Tenzin

**KIANGJING GUMPA VILLAGE MT 3890**

34. Kindo Lama
35. Ibi Pangen
36. Gomba Mingmar
37. Mem Dorjee Kyanjin
38. Pasang Bresang
39. Samden Tamang
40. Karchung Tamang
41. Mem Norsang
42. Au Kalsang
43. Mem Sonam
44. Gomba Dhindu
45. Mhe Sangmu
46. Pasang Wngdu

## **12. Instrument for the assessment of the project's efficacy**

During the winter of 2019, interviews were made in the houses of the elderly, in order to collect a list of their needs. The interviews were made by members of the Mendo Family Foundation. The interviews clearly show the current condition of the elderly, the location and the kind of housing, the age, they recount their life

before and after the earthquake, their source of sustenance and describe their most urgent needs.

All these information will be collected in the same way, after 4 months from the start of the project, and will continue with the development of the initiative. In this way we will have clear and reliable documentation to confront in time and an objective reference for eventual project modifications. The members of the association Julè&Namastè will go yearly to Langtang, in order to verify the work carried out by the Nepali partner.

Moreover, the video documentation, recorded in time, will be a historical memory of an important part of life of the inhabitants of the Langtang valley. A life destined, in the near future, to be deeply changed in customs and traditions as well as in the social organization and especially in the economic sphere.

The project, here described, is an initiative concerned with the support and aid destined to the Langtang population, with the rebuilding of houses and work activities begun in winter 2016. These initiatives have been organized and realised by the Nepalreconstruction Group of Bolzano, now merged in the Julè&Namastè association, and by the Langtang Disaster Relief Foundation association (Spain), now merged in the Mendo Family Foundation association.

### **13. Cost estimate**

The items of expenditure, which determine the costs of the projects, are the following:

**The food supplies' costs, destined to help 46 elderly people of Langtang, will be the following:**

1. **Rice:** 12 sacks, each sack weighs 50 kg and costs 35€. The transportation costs from Syabrubensi to Langtang (2600 metres of altitude difference) amount to 25€ for each sack. The time of the transportation will consist of two days, using pack animals and a person guiding the caravan.

The total of 12 sacks (35€+25€) will amount to:

- 720€ (12.5kg per person will be distributed every month)

2. **Dahl (lentils):** 4.5 sacks (each sack weighs 50 kg)

- 4.5 sacks (45€ for each sack + 25€ of transportation for each sack)

- 314.5€ (5 kg per person will be distributed every month)

3. **Wheat flour:** 9 sacks (each sack weighs 50 kg)

- 9 sacks (35€ for each sack + 25€ of transportation for each sack)

- 540€ (10 kg per person will be distributed every month)

4. **Sugar:** 2 sacks (each sack weighs 50 kg)

- 2 sacks (50€ for each sack + 25€ of transportation for each sack)

- 150€ (2 kg per person will be distributed every month)

5. **Seed oil for cooking:** 50 litres

- 75€ costs for 50 litres + 25€ of transportation

- 100€ (1 litre per person will be distributed every month)

6. **Tea and spices:** 200€ for the 46 elderly people every month

**The total of the costs for the food supplies monthly amounts to:**

**720 + 314 + 540 + 150 + 200 + 100 = 2024 Euro**

### **Personnel costs:**

The project includes the expenditure for three people, their tasks are divided as follows:

Every month Nima and Gyalpu purchase the food supplies and transport them and distribute them to the elderly. They collect information and list the needs of the people. Their work days amount to three every month. **The rate is of 150€ per person.**

The president of the Mendo Family Foundation coordinates the development of the project, she collects the information and lists the needs gathered by Nima and Gyalpu, she goes up to the Langtang vale to collect the elderly people's interviews. **The rate is of 150€ every month.**

**The total of the personnel costs amounts to 450€**

### **Traditional dress costs:**

The Tibetan New Year's Eve of Losar is celebrated every year around mid-February. It is the most important recurring event for the Buddhist community, during which families meet again and everyone wears the new traditional dress.

The elderly people are not able to do so, as it is too expensive, and as many belong to families who live far away or who are absent.

To provide them with a traditional dress represents an opportunity to keep alive this tradition and represents an opportunity to meet the community.



The cost of the traditional dress for all the elderly people amounts to 920€

The yearly total cost of the project amounts to 30.608 Euro

“The earthquake of 2015 in Nepal, changed the story of every single Nepalese, especially in Langtang. The whole village has completely been wiped away by a landslide caused by the earthquake, leaving the people with nothing. There is no place to call home anymore, there are no more people to call family and there is no more land to cultivate.

One could ask: Why help elderly people and not other people? The answer is simple. The young people have the opportunity to find an income source in tourism or, if they want they can go to Kathmandu. They have more options. On the contrary, the elderly people only know the mountain, their animals and their

land. They do not have the energy anymore to do many things and, at that age, even a small task becomes strenuous.

Moreover, as one can imagine, when living at 3500 metres of altitude winters become hard and unforgiving. These elderly people do not want to live a life in a crowded and polluted city.

The Nepali government does not help the elderly. This responsibility falls to their children. In Nepal the task of caring for the elderly parents is theirs. However, the life in Nepal is very hard for those who have reached an advanced age.

Moreover, in Langtang, many of the elderly e have lost their children. They are left without any help, and often, with the responsibility of looking after their grandchildren. This is the reason why it is

so important to help these mountain people.”

Pasang Bhutti\*

Promoter of projects in support of the reconstruction of the Langtang valley.

# JULÈ&NAMASTÈ

The president

The vice-president

Bolzano, April 2019

## Attachments:

- Statute of the Association Julè&Namastè;
- Report of the activities carried out by the initiative Tabo and Nepalreconstruction merged in Julè&Namastè;
- Map of Nepal;
- Map of the Langtang National Park;
- Four videos, of the elderly living in the Langtang valley, which summarise the 28 interviews;
- A video which recounts the purchase and the delivering of 21 yaks to the shepherd community in Langtang.