



Tsultrim Sangmo (center) opened a school for refugee children because others helped her when she fled Tibet as a child.

Kathmandu and Pasadena, Calif., helped purchase \$3,600 of computer equipment.

"Nepal is one of the poorest countries on earth," says Roy Kline, a charter member and incoming president of the Kavre-Banepa club. "So the needs are great for both Tibetan refugees and the Nepalese themselves."

The plight of the Tibetan refugees has attracted support from several clubs around the world. Among them, the Rotary Club of Sunshine, Australia, funds a tuberculosis control program for Tibetan refugees at Delek Hospital in Dharamsala, India. Rotary clubs in Dharamsala, along with clubs in The Netherlands, raised more than \$24,000 to help provide furniture and school supplies for the TCV Chantra School, serving Tibetan orphan refugees in Himachal Pradesh, India. A Matching Grant from the Foundation brought the project's total funding to nearly \$49,000.

Relief in the desert

As a nonpolitical organization with members in 168 countries, Rotary is in a unique position to help refugees as humanitarian crises develop. In 2003, for example, Rotary International and the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) completed a US\$1.9 million relief program for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Launched after a special appeal to Rotary clubs around the world, the program assisted more than 50,000 Afghan refugees living

in camps in Pakistan. It was the largest contribution by a private organization to UNHCR's relief effort in the country.

"Rotary International stepped in when the need was greatest and through the generosity and hard work of its members, the lives of many Afghan refugees were improved," says Philip Karani, acting UNHCR representative in Pakistan.

Through the program, residents of the Shalman and Mohamed Kheil-2 refugee camps received aid packages that included blankets, jackets, soaps, tea, dates, water storage tanks, medical supplies, educational materials for children, kerosene lamps, and oil. The Rotary initiative also set up basic skills-training schools to prepare the refugees for gainful employment.

Past RI Vice President Wilf Wilkinson and Past RI Director Lynmar Brock played an active role in building support for Afghan refugees, and clubs around the world responded to the call for resources. The Rotary Club of Liège-Sud, Belgium, is raising funds to provide a dormitory

for working children, child soldiers, and war-affected children in Jalalabad, and the Rotary Club of Chinon, France, has collaborated with the nongovernmental organization Amite Franco-Afghane to upgrade resources at the University Library in Jalalabad.

The first Rotary Club of Kabul (founded in 1968) closed in 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. In 2002, the impetus to start again came from a Rotary club in California made up mostly of Afghan immigrants. The Kabul club's revival has enabled resources for Afghani projects to be channeled directly into the country.

But in many war-torn areas, clubs in countries bordering those producing large numbers of refugees are often best suited to deliver resources provided by the international community of Rotarians. Before the Kabul club formed, for example, some Afghan refugee relief was channeled through the Rotary Club of Uni Town Peshawar, Pakistan.

Zamarud Shah, past president of the club, met Fary Moini, a member of the La Jolla Golden Triangle club in California, while the two were working in refugee camps in Peshawar in early 2002.

"I was working as a nurse," says Moini, "but I thought education was another thing the refugees were missing, especially the children and especially the girls. They would all be returning to Afghanistan, where women have



been essentially prisoners in their own homes, and there was no access to education at all."

Moini returned to California with an ambitious plan: She would lead an effort to finance, build, and furnish a school near Jalalabad, Afghanistan. Between 2002 and 2004 she shuttled back and forth between California and Jalalabad, often joined by other Rotarians from her club. Beyond her own club, Moini received support from The Rotary Foundation and other foundations, as well as many private contributors – more than 400 sources in all.

"I will tell you one thing about my club," said Moini, "I love them to death. When I was over there and we were just getting the thing off the ground, I needed \$700 to buy a generator. I sent an e-mail asking for the money, and do you know how much they gave from their own pockets? They sent \$7,000!"

Support from the Uni Town Peshawar club was instrumental in navigating the many logistical roadblocks that

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– Fary Moini, Rotarian

humanitarians encounter when working in a developing, war-torn country.

"Zamarud Shah and his family were great hosts," says Moini, "and fearless supporters." Shah traveled each week through the Khyber Pass to Jalalabad to keep the project on track, delivering construction materials, skilled labor, and funds for workers.

In 2004, after nearly 18 months of construction, the Najmul Jihad School was completed. Situated about 12 miles from the center of Jalalabad, the school has 20 classrooms, a library, a clinic, and a multipurpose room – all of which accommodate some 2,000 children, who attend in two shifts.

The school cost \$220,000 to build and an additional \$45,000 to furnish. "But," says Moini, "to see hundreds of beautiful girls and boys there in their uniforms, smiling and singing and learning, was worth millions." ■

Tom Clynes is an award-winning journalist and a frequent contributor to The Rotarian.



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