

Since 1998, TPAF has been providing poor and disadvantaged Tibetans with credit, jobs training, health education and other assistance to improve their food and income security and general well-being. In 2011, TPAF initiated programs generating increased income for poor women and their families in war-torn Gaza. Shortly thereafter we expanded our support to women living in poorest parts of Myanmar, Turkey and Nepal. During 2016 TPAF initiated employable skills training to Syrian refugee women stuck in Istanbul, Turkey with little or no support from family members in Syria or from other public sources. TPAF hopes to continue to help up to 50 Syrian refugee families in Istanbul during 2017.

TPAF Support to Tibetan Communities concluded in 2016

In late 2015, Premier Xi Jinping announced a new program to eliminate all residual poverty among 70 million people living in 1,200 poorest administrative villages by the end of 2020. His 2017 New Year statement reiterated his priority to this program. This highest level priority was reflected in the substantial over attendance in mid 2016 of TPAF financed training workshops for poverty alleviation officials working in Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Qinghai and the Tibet Autonomous Region. At the workshops, TPAF program “best practices” found to be effective in increasing poor household food and income security, securing jobs as a result of employable skills training, and introducing renewable solar energy able to reduce overutilization of scarce wood and other natural resources training were described. The best practices were also incorporated into training manuals. The best practices included the following:

- ◆ Greenhouses enabling households to increase vegetable production and improve family nutrition;
- ◆ Cash crops such as grapes, walnuts and high value medicinal plants, helping to expand family incomes;
- ◆ Large and small livestock, particularly cattle, yak, pigs, goats and chickens for household consumption and sale;
- ◆ Microcredit enabling families to introduce household small income generating activities;
- ◆ Solar hot water heaters helping to save scarce energy resources while providing hot water for household cooking and hygiene and animal feed preparation;
- ◆ Fuel efficient stoves saving on wood by more than 20% for household cooking and heating;
- ◆ Vocational skills training helping unemployed youth to find steady off-farm jobs, and to repatriate income;
- ◆ Training of villagers in improved personal health, hygiene and sanitation behavior practices, and.
- ◆ Increased income for Tibetan artisans selling improved design products in the local and US markets.

The USAID grant financing the TPAF program in Tibetan areas of China concluded in October 2016.



-Young Tibetan nomadic children.
-Household Greenhouse-producing vegetables year round.
-Microfinance loan for profitable village dry-goods store.

2016 In Review

TPAF Completes Program with Tibetan Households and Communities

A local Tibetan NGO, the Shangri'la Association for Cultural Preservation (SACP) partnered with TPAF to provide employable skills training to Tibetan youth in the fields of cement mixing techniques, electrician skills and restaurant cooking skills. The trainees in cement mixing and restaurant cooking skills mostly found steady employment in their villages while the electricians also found employment in the reconstruction of houses in Shangri'la Old Town after the January 2014 devastating fire there. In addition, SACP promoted the development of eco-tourism at two locations where, with TPAF financing, two eco-lodges were constructed and local villagers were trained to manage trekking, lodging, provision of Tibetan food and cultural entertainment. During the tourist season each year, at least 90 households benefitted from tourism-related business and services.

Over the past six years TPAF focused on what could help to achieve greater food and income security for poorest Tibetan households, and on preventive actions that could help preserve the environment and energy resources of poor households. This included the adoption of solar heating and fuel efficient stoves. Solar energy hot water heaters were often installed on top of lavatories where they could contribute to improved household hygiene as well as to hot water needed for cooking and for mixing of animal feed. The fuel efficient stoves had the advantage of reducing the amount of wood needed for heating and cooking purposes. The stoves were ventilated and could also reduce the amount of noxious smoke from open fires that often contributed to eye infections and bronchial diseases.

TPAF also gave priority to villager preventive health care training focusing on methods of reducing the incidence of communicable diseases such as TB, hepatitis and HIVAIDS, and ways to improve prenatal and post natal reproductive health practices. The TPAF behavior change communication (BCC) methodology of training involved training of township and village trainers and then these trainers training villagers in improved family health and nutrition, personal hygiene and household sanitation behavior practices. At the village level, much of the training focused on women, including women's health needs.



TPAF Artisan Programs Achieve Self Reliance in 2016

In 2016 the TPAF artisan program in Tibet was re-structured from a cooperative to a municipal enterprise that was more manageable under the leadership of Nyima Tashi and a more streamlined board including Lakpa Tsering, the Director of the Ancient Art Restoration Company where the Lhasa Villages staff and store are located. Lhasa Villages has received major grants from the TAR Government to provide training in product design, production and marketing to Tibetan artisan associations. Lhasa Villages has attained greater profitability and also now runs an outlet in Shangri'la.

During 2016, TPAF continued support to the Rafah Women's Program Center in Gaza, enabling it to train a total of 75 women in basic seamstress skills, and in the establishment, management and operation of small tailoring shops in their own communities. In addition, it financed the Center's program to design and market shawls, hand bags, pillow covers, I-pad covers, pocket books and other items for sale in the large US market. The program is providing income to over 100 women and their families.

During 2016, TPAF also continued to assist with the design of artisan products from Chin State in Myanmar under the Chin Chili label, and with products made by very poor women at the Janakpur Women's Center in the troubled southern region of Nepal. In 2016, the women at Janakpur managed to produce and market products valued at over \$7,050 in the US market, despite transport strikes, street violence, fuel shortages and curfews. Chin Chili managed sales in the US market of \$17,685.

TPAF also continued to provide assistance to 25 disadvantaged women in Soma, Turkey. The Soma women and their families were victimized in 2012 by the loss of over 300 miners in a mining fire and the subsequent shutdown of the mines. In 2016, TPAF financed two workshops intended to help with the improved design of artisan products, and the training of the women in their production. TPAF also helped with the strengthened commercial management of the Soma program, and the diversified sale of processed food products to improve revenues. Soma had revenues of over \$8,000 from US sales in 2016.



Ted Wendell, TPAF Treasurer, and Arthur with Lakpa and Nyima recently in Lhasa. At right, Drolma, the Lhasa Villages store manager in Lhasa.



Above: Women in Rafah producing embroidery for products sold in the US
Below: Women at Janakpur making their painted artisan products



Above left, Soma, Turkey artisans sewing their products. At right, artisan products being sold at New York International Gift Fair in August 2016.

Syrian Women's Refugee Program to be Expanded and Localized in 2017

The plight of Syrian refugees in Turkey continues to be horrendous, with more than 3 million now seeking refuge in the country, mostly located in crowded camps. As many as 350,000 are also located in Istanbul. Those in Istanbul are generally living in overcrowded, decrepit apartments, often doubled up with other families. Generally, the families are headed by women, as the men are either in Europe or back in Syria fighting or protecting their household properties. Families tend to be large with many children.

During 2016, TPAF provided employable skills training to 25 refugee women, and helped with product design and marketing in the US under a Syrian "Palmyra" label. It also financed the development of a website to facilitate future e-commerce based marketing and sales of Syrian artisan products. During 2017, the TPAF project will conduct additional product design, training, marketing and sales activities managed by local Turkish consultants and trainers. TPAF hopes to expand the number of refugee women benefiting under the program to 50 in 2017, if possible.



Syrian Refugee women making artisan products (top). Woman displays Syrian motif on purse and hand bag products (below).



The Syrian refugee women bring some of their younger children to the production site for daycare and to learn the Turkish language and other subjects. (left).

How You Can Help

TPAF secures its funding from a variety of government, foundation and individual sources wishing to help improve the well-being of poor and disadvantaged people, particularly in areas where there is widespread recognition of a need for greater basic social justice. In 2017, our program will continue to focus on ways to benefit Syrian refugee women artisans and their families. Your support is important to us in achieving our social objectives.

Check made payable to The Poverty Alleviation Fund

Mail To: Arthur Holcombe
President, TPAF
663 Green Street
Cambridge, MA, 02139

Email: arthurholcombe@tpaf.org

TPAF was founded in 1997 as a non-political, U.S. non-governmental organization (NGO) with tax-exempt status. The Internal Revenue Service designates The Poverty Alleviation Fund as a 501(c)(3) federally tax-exempt organization. TPAF provides a mailed paper receipt for all charitable donations.

