

# Charities Great and Small

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Each week we receive requests for donations from about ten major charities – we all seem to. Roughly speaking, they can be divided into home and abroad - the providers (Lifeboats, the Samaritans, the Royal National Institute for the Blind) and appeals for those in desperate need of food and shelter. A few seek to help animals and some are hoping to improve the environment. One (UNICEF) springs to mind as a charity that quotes the proportion of the takings that actually reaches their target group. To be fair, charities are usually explicit in what they are seeking to improve and we feel they deserve support which we cannot provide.

However, the biggest charity is the UK itself. We recently had a cyclostyled letter signed by Tony Blair. He says he is "Yours ever" and signed with a thin-nibbed pen. Gordon Brown signed with a broad nib and, if graphology means anything, there must be a huge difference in character. Amongst other things they said that at the G8 summit at Gleneagles, the UK had pledged TEN BILLION pounds to develop education in poor countries.

It makes a great headline – Ten Billion for the Classroom. However it is to be spread over ten years. There is nothing to say whether or not the pledge holds if the Prime Minister or the Government changes. The billions work out at less than the cost of a bottle of beer a week per head of our population.

There was a hint at the administration needed (and don't forget the cost of their offices) to divide up the cake. Which countries get how much and how do you make this a fair decision?

There was definite mention of anti-corruption police. This opens up not a can of worms but a bathful!

In brief, the value of dealing with someone you know you can trust is enormous. The cost of distrust (even when it is not justified) can be high and corruption is a hydra. Cut off

one head and another ten will grow. How much will go to education is anyone's guess!

## Small Charities

October 8<sup>th</sup> was the anniversary of the most severe earthquake Northern Pakistan has known. In one particularly remote area, the Palas Valley, where evening temperatures sink to -10C in December and where many people live above the snowline, the World Pheasant Association (WPA) was able to provide £5,000 for immediate relief with more to follow. WPA members subscribed a further £20,000 promptly. This was spent on transporting relief goods, tents, food etc to the valley, and setting up a Medical Camp where 1,000 people were treated. The only road into the valley was destroyed, so the sole means of access was by helicopter.



Virtually all the houses in the valley that were not destroyed outright were so badly damaged that they could collapse at any moment. After shocks continued. At the time of the earthquake many inhabitants were outdoors. Falling boulders caused many deaths and injuries. Livestock, on which they depend, were killed and all the bridle paths and the one short road into the valley were destroyed.



Following this intervention, the people now realise that the WPA is not only interested in pheasants but also in the welfare of local people – and able and willing to help. They are also learning that a living can be made from conserving forests rather than by felling. The collecting and selling of non-timber forest products is especially important to them. They are now very reluctant to cut forests down.



The World Pheasant Association was set up about 25 years ago, when three couples decided to try to safeguard the breeding grounds of wild pheasants worldwide. Their interest in the Palas Valley centred on a rare pheasant called the Western Tragopan. They had a well trained representative in the area called Rab Nawaz. He was well known to the locals and clearly cared deeply about the area and the people there, so it was possible to deliver help quickly when needed.

In Nepal, the upper part of the Pipar Valley near Pokhara is the breeding ground for five species of Himalayan pheasants. About twenty years ago the WPA made a “gentleman’s agreement” with the local villagers. “If you do not hunt the pheasants in the breeding season and if you do conserve the forests, we will help with the schools.”



All Saints' is involved with the work of WPA in Nepal in that one third of all takings from the Produce Stall go to the WPA for the benefit of schools in the Pipar Valley. (The other thirds go to a rural hospital in Nepal (through UMN) and All Saints' Fabric Fund.)

We have visited the Pipar schools several times on behalf of the WPA, most recently in March this year. One school had no tap and no toilet – essential, particularly if you want to explain hygiene. The WPA contributed the money. The locals provided the labour and the Pahar Trust (a Gurkha organisation) provided the engineering expertise. In a similar way, we have seen great improvement in a school that needed to be largely rebuilt, and another where the loo was left hanging over a cliff after a landslide caused by the monsoon. At all times the work has been supervised by an English ex-Gurkha officer who lives in Kathmandu. He also controls the payments.

As a lasting contribution to the Palas, WPA is planning to provide a new primary school to replace one destroyed in the earthquake. This would be planned and executed in the same manner as those in the Pipar Valley have been. The estimate is that it will cost £10,000 and £2,500 has already been raised.

These are examples of how a small charity can provide a prompt, appropriate response – but on a relatively small scale.

*Editor's Note:* You can find out more about the Palas Valley at <http://www.palavalley.org/> and about the WPA's work there at [http://www.pheasant.org.uk/Palav\\_update\\_nov.htm](http://www.pheasant.org.uk/Palav_update_nov.htm)