



On September 6th Surmang Foundation will host the first annual Rural Health Festival at the Surmang Dharma Sagara Clinic. This Festival is part of the kick-off

for this, the first year of our cooperative project with the Chinese Government, Yushu Prefecture Public Health Bureau. The project goal is to implant the successful Surmang rural health model into the broader public health system. The goal of the festival is to share the skills, values and inspiration of our projects among the 50 Surmang Community Health Workers.

Rural, ultra-poor China, of which Surmang and Yushu are a part, is a vast place where people earn less than US\$15/day. They have world record-high levels of maternal and infant mortality. A pregnant woman in this region has a 1 in 15 chance of dying during or prior to delivery. This is a 3 x greater risk than US soldiers face in Afghanistan.

The main issue for these remote nomadic and farming people is not just access to health care services, but how the system doesn't connect their traditional culture with the culture of health. At Surmang we've added local buy-in because Community Health Workers are embedded in their villages, towns and encampments, saving hundreds of lives of babies and mothers and equally importantly being able to refer bigger problems to the Surmang Clinic.

The festival will be a peer-led conference. Its goal is to showcase and celebrate our successful community-based public health projects. Surmang Foundation has invited over 80 participants to the festival, 70 of whom are ethnic Tibetan, including all 40 Surmang Community Health Workers (CHWs) + 10 recent recruits. The activities will be a platform for our CHWs to share their knowledge, their experience and their inspiration.

What makes this festival not just another conference is that its focus is not output-oriented, not being led by public health experts on high who will transmit insight or techniques. Rather its goal is to transmit the inspiration of the CHWs and to extend their friendship to our new partners. Getting their whole-hearted buy-in is the essential point in our strategic partnership with the Government.

Some of the activities include: folk and religious dance, sharing travel stories, descriptions of nomadic and farming life, role playing of problems for remote women and children, demonstrations of their training and the road ahead.

In addition to new CHWs from the Xiewu and Longbao regions will be 5 representatives of the Pendeba Foundation, community organizers from Western Tibet. We are also happy to welcome a high-level delegation including

- Dr. Ray Yip, Country Director, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Dr. Mariette Weibenger, Holland,
- Amy Levi, CNM, PhD, FACNM, Clinical Professor, Director,
Interdepartmental Nurse-Midwifery Education Program, HWPP Clinical
Consultant, University of California, San Francisco
- Karen Deutsch, RN, MPH
- Dr. Dawn Factor, RN, MPH
- Dr. Mary Wellhoner, MPH
- Dr. Tim Silbaugh