

Monk collects for kids' charity

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A BUDDHIST monk who visits Exmouth has achieved the colossal task of raising £22,000 for the new children's library in Ethiopia. Kelsang Pawo, 63, first visited Exmouth two years ago to raise money to build a library and bring enlightened happiness to the 700 children living in the villages of Gondar. The monies raised will go directly to the Arbatu Ensesa School and building will be overseen by the monk himself when he sets out in October. His Gesar Foundation for Children, set up in 2005, works directly to bring some peace and happiness for children who have led tormented lives and "to give all children an opportunity." Kelsang, raised in East London, was ordained 30 years ago by the Dalai Lama, Tibet's head of state, and given his name which means most fortunate of Englishmen. He has walked around the world, relying on the kindness of people for transport, food and shelter. Following his two year trek around Britain he discovered the need to support local children through projects that link directly with his work in Ethiopia. He said: "It is interesting that there are so many children here who have nothing so we have started to open drama clubs." These drama clubs are set up as community projects especially for children who have learning difficulties and fundraise for monies to be sent out to Gondar to help with the Gesar project. The Gesar Drama School in Bideford is the first of many with the hope to set up more across Devon combining their help of children locally and abroad. Kelsang explained that these schools will help the children and parents. "Sometimes mothers need a break. If children can go to this drama club it gives them well deserved space." He is delighted at the support he has had from Exmouth residents and said: "I would like to thank everyone for their support and wish them all the happiness in this world." If anyone would like to donate to The Gesar Foundation for Children please visit www.gesarfoundation.org

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