

TIBET MATTERS

Issue 34 | SUMMER 2019



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Tashi Delek!

Welcome to your bumper summer issue of *Tibet Matters*! Inside you will see how your donations over the last year have enabled us to make a huge difference to the lives of thousands of Tibetans.

From rebuilding homes destroyed in the Nepal earthquakes, to empowering young Tibetans to follow their dreams, we were only able to achieve all of this with your support; **thank you**.

2019 marks 60 years since the Dalai Lama fled occupied Tibet for India, followed by the first wave of refugees. Four months later Tibet Relief Fund was established. Now, after 60 years of working with Tibetans, we are refocusing our work to address the changing and evolving needs of the Tibetan community.

We are also marking our anniversary in lots of other ways! Activities kicked off with **#Time4Tibet**, a digital awareness project to raise the public profile of Tibet. We posted a video, photo or quote every day in the 60 days running up to 10 March, Tibetan National Uprising Day, to tell the story of Tibet and Tibetans since 1959. The campaign reached more than 300,000 people and had thousands of likes and

shares across social media! You can still check it out at www.tibetrelieffund.co.uk/time4tibet

Next up is the launch at the end of July of **60 Lives**, an exciting new sponsorship campaign. On pages 14-15 you will find an insight into our sponsorship programme - we hope it inspires you to change someone's life through sponsoring.

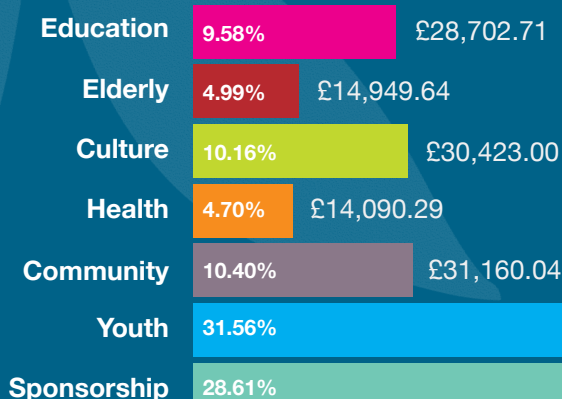
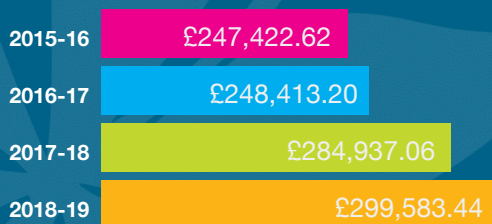
There are all sorts of other great ways for you to get involved and help us make our 60th anniversary year our best yet! Turn to pages 8-9 for just a few ideas and a taste of upcoming events.

This issue is full of inspiring updates and stories from the Tibetans we work with. I do hope you enjoy seeing the life-changing impact your generosity has helped make a reality.

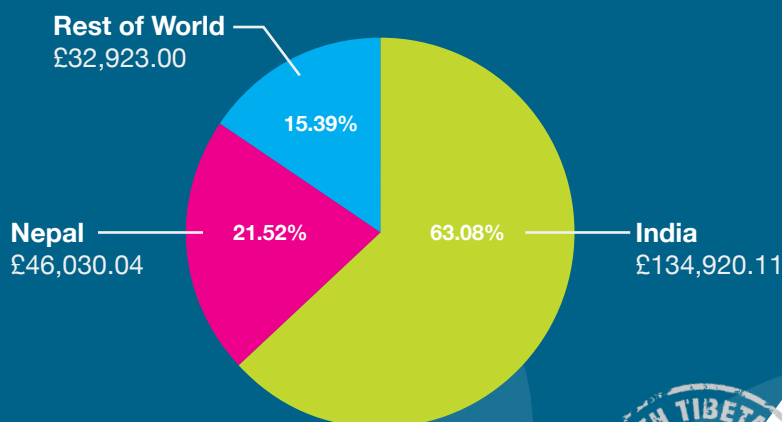
Philippa Carrick

Philippa Carrick, CEO

Grants distributed



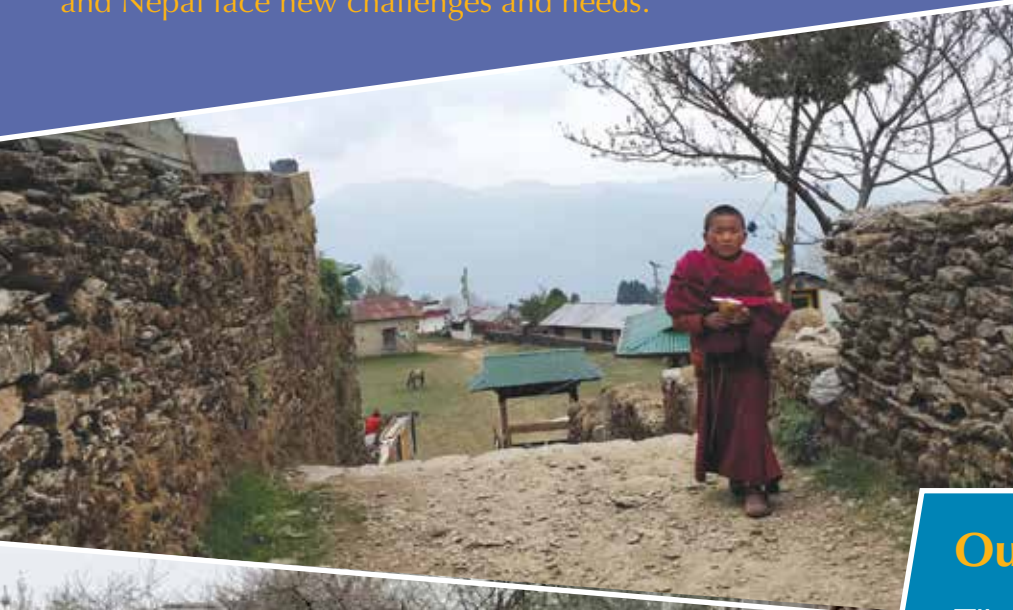
By Country (exc. sponsorship)





Changing needs

After 60 years, Tibetans living in exile in India and Nepal face new challenges and needs.



To enable us to better understand the changing priorities, last year we conducted an in-depth research trip to Tibetan settlements across north India and Nepal.

Over the page are some of the key takeaways from the trip. These will help inform our future work to focus on where we are most needed and will have the most impact.



Our Mission:



Tibet Relief Fund works to empower Tibetans to build sustainable communities and better futures through education and innovative practical grassroots initiatives.



Our Vision:



A world where Tibetans can live and work with equality and security and celebrate their rich culture and traditions.

Nepal

Tibetans living in Nepal face far greater challenges than Tibetans living in neighbouring India, particularly in rural and remote settlements.

These challenges largely stem from legitimacy and documentation issues. Tibetan refugees who turned 18 after 1989 do not have a Refugee Certificate (RC), the legal document granting residency in Nepal. This effectively makes them foreigners with no legal status. Without an RC or other documentation proving citizenship or right to live in Nepal, Tibetans have few options.

Only Nepali citizens can work in the public sector and the only private sector work available is low paid and temporary with no chance of progression.

“Without a Refugee Certificate there is a ceiling, you can only get low-level jobs. People don’t trust people without documentation.”

- A Tibetan from Namgyaling settlement

For Tibetans hoping to start their own businesses, documentation issues make the registration process difficult and they are often forced to register in the name of a Nepali citizen, which does not give long-term security.

With these constraints there is a growing frustration amongst Tibetan youth. Jampa, a young Tibetan living in Rasuwa, explained that schools don’t prepare students for the reality of life after leaving school. He wants to see a change of focus to vocational training, including subjects like entrepreneurship and agricultural studies, to enable young Tibetans to start modernising farming techniques within settlements and be able to create their own employment.

Tibetans without a Refugee Certificate

- Can’t own land
- Can’t legally cross borders into neighbouring countries
- Have limited or no access to: phone SIM cards, bank accounts, driving licences
- Can’t get skilled jobs or develop professional careers
- Can’t legitimately own a business
- Aren’t eligible for a work permit



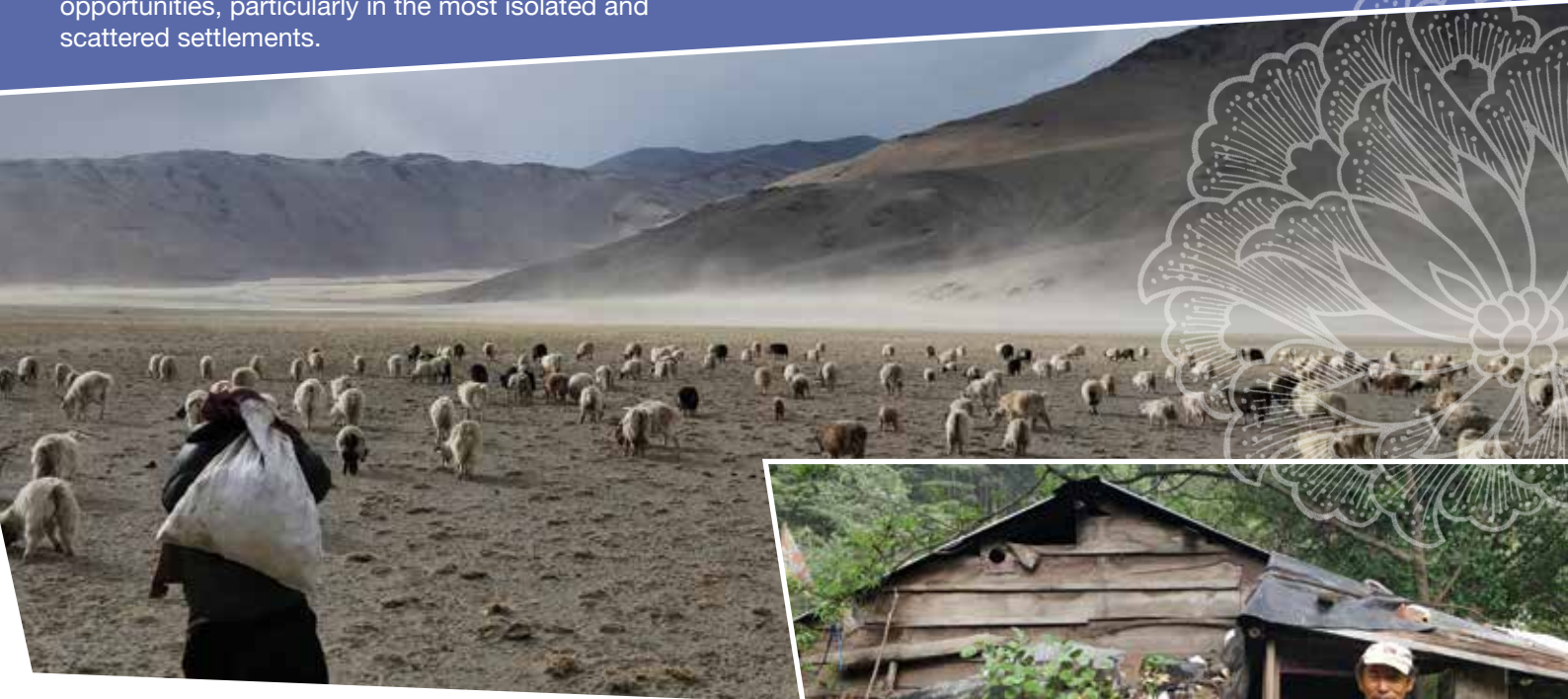
India

Overall Tibetans living in India have more opportunities than those in Nepal. Most have access to financial services and household amenities, whilst literacy rates and education levels are higher.

However, experiences within settlements do vary as they are subject to the laws of individual state governments. This is most obvious in land ownership and employment opportunities, particularly in the most isolated and scattered settlements.

The nomadic communities in the north western areas, who rely on the land and livestock for income, also struggle to survive.

The impact of climate change on grazing pastures is making the nomadic way of life increasingly unsustainable. Also, as their children receive an education, the children no longer wish to live as nomads. With many moving to the cities, populations are dwindling.



The next 60 years ...

Our work has adapted and changed over the last 60 years, and the next 60 will be no different!

This research will help us establish new programmes whilst building on our existing work. We will also expand our grassroots civil society partnerships to promote self-reliance and sustainability to give Tibetans, in exile and inside Tibet, the foundations upon which to flourish ...

Nepal: vocational training and start-up grants to develop small businesses and more efficient farming practices.

Further research into Nepali employment law and establish a grassroots support network.

India: identify settlements most in need and work with them to develop programmes to build security and sustainability.

Tibet: connect with partner agencies to work inside Tibet in the areas of education and training.

Create opportunities for Tibetans to establish businesses and services to strengthen communities.





Empowering young Tibetans to follow their dreams...

With your support, our Delhi-based youth empowerment project, Empowering the Vision, was able to award ten students 'fellowships' enabling them to enrol for further training in specialised fields and follow their dreams. The skills and courses you have funded ranged from music-mixing to tattoo art!

Here Tenzin Aruhtsang, a fellowship recipient who is studying for his diploma in clinical optometry, tells us his plans for the future ...

“Upon completion of the course, I am planning to volunteer at Tibetan monasteries/nunneries and schools in India, as I believe I can benefit the maximum number of people with my expertise in these institutions.”



Photo: Empowering the Vision Leadership Workshop, April 2019



Photo: Tenzin Aruhtsang at work



Mobile learning...

Working with Lodrik Welfare Fund in Pokhara, we are funding skills training for young Tibetans in Nepal who have not been able to complete formal education or want to pursue vocational careers such as Tibetan tailoring or barista training.

Tenzin Tsephel is 16 and lives in Paljorling settlement with his family. Thanks to your donations he has been able to take a course in mobile phone repairing ...

“Mobile phones have become a lifeline for individuals of all ages however people rarely know how to repair minor technical issues, which leads them into paying any amount technician asks for. When I heard about this grant, I was thrilled about taking this opportunity to pursue my passion. With this skills, I can assist the residents of my community in fixing their phones with the best of my abilities.”



Congratulations Pema and Kalsang!

Thanks to a legacy and your donations, Tibet Relief Fund was able to support Pema and Kalsang through their four-year nursing degrees. We have featured their progress in past *Tibet Matters* and were delighted to hear they have both now graduated and started jobs at prestigious medical centres in India!

“We became the very first in our family to hold a degree. It was such a proud and monumental moment for us.”

Kalsang is working in the neurological intensive care unit at a Delhi hospital. It is very rare and impressive for a new graduate to start working in such a specialised department so quickly.

Meanwhile Pema is a Nurse Mentor Supervisor in Bihar (east India). She provides training across all state government health facilities: *“I help the midwives in giving hands on practice, setting up the labour room and ensuring safe delivery... I make sure to interact with patients’ families, listen to their stories and provide them knowledge about the maternal-child health and family planning.”*

We are all so happy for Pema and Kalsang and immensely proud of their achievement. We know this is just the beginning of their amazing futures.

“Kalsang and I would like to thank you all from the bottom of our hearts for giving us wings to fly and chase after our dreams.”



Photo: Pema with one of her newest patients



Photo: Kalsang at work

Get involved

Meditate for Tibet is fast approaching!

This year will be our fourth annual mass meditation for Tibet. Already lots of you have downloaded our four brand-new guided meditations, recorded especially for Tibet Relief Fund's 60th anniversary. Thank you!

It's not too late to join our mass meditation for Tibet where you can send positive thoughts to Tibet, so Tibetans all over the world know Tibet is not forgotten. If you have not already, make sure to mark your diary!

Saturday 6 July, 3pm

If you're new to meditation, don't worry - it's really easy to join in, especially if you have our wonderful guided meditations to follow. As well as connecting lots of people together, Meditate for Tibet raises vital funds to help Tibetans build a brighter future.



You can contribute by...

buying the special guided meditations (CD or download)
purchasing a full meditation kit (see opposite)
organising a group event - we'll send you a free fundraising pack!

To donate or purchase simply visit
www.enlightenedgifts.org/MeditateForTibet
or call the office on 020 3119 0041

If you can get a group together, call us or email
caroline@tibetrelieffund.co.uk for your free fundraising pack that has everything you need to create a great event.

Let's make this year the most meaningful meditation yet.
#MeditateForTibet

Tibetan Momo Masterclass

Our momo-making workshop, led by Alex Lobsang, was a huge hit last autumn! We've just listed a new date on Airbnb Experiences - **Saturday 8th June 2019** - once again at the beautiful Clementi House in west London. Don't miss your chance to learn how to make momos. Spaces are limited!

Book online now: www.tibetrelieffund.co.uk/momo





You are part of our history...

In July Tibet Relief Fund turns 60! To celebrate this, over the next year we will be showcasing some of our achievements, which have only been made possible through your interest, support and generosity.

Your stories are part of our history! We would love to hear from you to learn how you became involved with Tibet Relief Fund, how you heard about Tibet, what inspired you, if you volunteered in the field or anything else that comes to mind! Photos would also be great.

To be part of our celebration, please email caroline@tibetrelieffund.co.uk or write to us at **2 Baltic Place, London N1 5AQ**. Thank you!

To kick off, long-standing supporter, Val, tells us what sparked her connection with Tibet...

“A young Tibetan monk stayed with my family during part of his time studying in the UK and a lifetime friendship was born. I feel blessed by the wonderful Tibetans I have met and am in awe of their wisdom and incredible courage.”

Donate your birthday

We've been immensely touched by a number of our followers on Facebook setting up fundraisers to celebrate their birthday and support Tibet Relief Fund. In this, our 60th year, will you share your celebration with us and join them? Visit our Facebook page, click **“Create a fundraiser”** and nominate Tibet Relief Fund. It's really that simple!



TIBETMATTERS

60th anniversary raffle

Don't miss out on your chance to win one of **60 fantastic prizes!** Every ticket sold supports our work, so all the more reason to enter!

To enter either send back the tickets you've received, or buy tickets online, www.tibetrelieffund.co.uk/raffle (You can also see a full list of prizes on the above web page.)

If you didn't get tickets with your magazine, or would like to request more, email raffle@tibetrelieffund.co.uk or call **020 3119 0041**.

The draw is on 31 July 2019 and the raffle is open to UK residents over 16.



GET YOUR 60TH ANNIVERSARY Meditate for Tibet kit!

- 60 minutes of calming guided meditations (CD or download)
- soft & cosy blanket
- meditation mat
- incense & prayer flags
- signed copy of *The Enlightened Spaniel*
- + a donation to support our work

Support Tibetans

Create a lovely space to meditate

all for £60

enlightenedgifts.org/MeditateForTibetKit

Appeal Updates



Thank you for your amazing response to our appeals over the past year. Without your donations none of the stories below could have become reality. Your compassion is so appreciated and your generosity is having a direct impact.



Helping Tibetan children feel less alone over winter

Thanks to your generosity, Dechen and the children at Tibetan Homes Foundation had a wonderful winter break. It can feel very lonely being left at school over the holidays, but this year the children from Mussoorie and Rajpur schools who couldn't go home to their families were treated to a four-day trip to Dehradun.

The children from the two separate campuses loved meeting and getting to know each other on the trip. They enjoyed a picnic, visits to the cinema and zoo, and shopping for Losar (Tibetan New Year) gifts. They also visited a monastery and received a blessing from His Holiness Sakya Trizin.

The exceptionally cold winter meant the children needed extra firewood to stay warm. Your support also made this possible.

Keeping Tibetan elders safe and warm

The cold months of winter can be a struggle for Tibetan elders living in northern India, but your support kept them comfortable and happy.

"Provision of warm clothes and firewood to our elderly people were a blessing to help them try to keep themselves warm during these parts of the year", said Dekyi Wangmo, Project Officer for Tibetan Homes Foundation.

Your wonderful response to our appeal also meant the elders received some money as a Losar gift.

"All the elderly people were very glad for this lovely extra gift to celebrate their Losar in a better way."

Teaching Tibetan women to read and write

This project has been a great success! You enabled this group of carpet weavers to start learning to read and write Tibetan and English. They are now more confident and independent.

"Classes are going very well and all the women are enthusiastically paying attention ... They are all very thankful and happy to learn." said Lhakpa, Secretary at Tibetan Women's Centre in Dehradun.





Bricks for Bakhang

Seven families safely rehomed!

Your donations to support the most vulnerable families in Bakhang have enabled safe homes to be built for seven families. Only the eighth house is still to be finished. It needs its roof! Once completed (hopefully this month), Nigma Doma Sherpa can move in to his new home.

The severe monsoon had slowed down the rebuild, as there were several months where the rain was very heavy and the roads were washed out. But the villagers finally got there and are enjoying their new homes. Thank you for making this happen!

“The families are really really happy for their new homes and have been working hard in the construction.”

– Andreas, Build Up Nepal

Quick progress being made on second group of houses

A wonderfully generous gift of £15,000 from one of our supporters has made it possible to extend house reconstruction to six more families in need. We recently received an update from Nepal to let us know this second group of houses is progressing fast. We were told all foundations have been completed and 5,000 earth bricks have been produced (half of the required bricks for the construction of the six houses).

The villagers and engineers are now working hard to complete the walls and hopefully also the roofing before the monsoon begins this year.

Mrs Tenjing Lama, one of the new beneficiaries, is living in a temporary shelter made from corrugated iron sheets with her husband and two sons. She is really looking forward to having a safe new home.



Photo: Completing the foundations



Photo: Producing earth bricks



Photo: Chungi Sherpa in her new home

Walkers wanted! 1st - 18th October 2019 Everest Base Camp fundraising trek to Nepal

Join the trip of a lifetime to the Himalayas whilst raising money and awareness for the Tibetan Community UK (North) and help them to keep Tibet's language, culture and identity alive!

For more information contact Susie at The Walking & Climbing Company:
sbaer@walkingandclimbing.co.uk or call 01977 706718





Grants for grannies

Dekyiling Tibetan Handicraft Centre (near Dehradun in north India) was established to preserve Tibet's handloom weaving culture. It provides much-needed employment for skilled artisans to earn a living whilst training the younger generations of craftspeople.

Photos: Dekyi Palmo working on her loom

We have been working with the Centre for the past 15 years and recently started supporting some employees as they find the work more challenging in their old age.

Last year we sent 'granny stipends' to three women who have all been working at the Centre for many years. With their advancing age they are no longer able to keep up with the fast pace of work and so cannot make enough money to live on.

With your support, they receive 9,600 INR (about £105) every six months to top up their very basic income, nearly all of which goes on housing costs. These additional funds mean they can buy food, medicine and any other essentials to make their lives more comfortable as they approach retirement.

Dekyi Palmo

At eight years old Dekyi fled Tibet with the first wave of refugees in 1959. She settled in Bhutan where she worked as a manual labourer and married. Tragically, at the age of 30, Dekyi found herself widowed with two young daughters. She and her children ultimately resettled in Dehradun where she helped build the first houses of Dekyiling settlement.

For the last 35 years she has worked at the Handicraft Centre, but as she gets older weaving is steadily more difficult. Her daughters have started their own families in other parts of India and Dekyi was struggling to manage on her increasingly small income.

She now receives one of our stipends and describes it as "a life support" that gives her peace of mind every day.



Photos: Dekyi weaving

Tibet Relief Fund is committed to preserving and promoting Tibet's cultural heritage. Last year we undertook lots of exciting new projects including putting on several exhibitions, hosting a poetry evening and publishing our first book ...

Colouring Culture

Last year we published our first book, *The Fabric of Tibet; regional dress from the roof of the world*, along with an accompanying colouring book so Tibetan and non-Tibetan speaking children can learn about Tibet's rich culture at an early age.

This features 20 beautiful illustrations of Tibetan people from around the country wearing regional dress, along with simple descriptions in Tibetan and English.

We have distributed nearly 1,500 copies to early years students at Tibetan schools in India and Nepal and are so pleased to see the children making the books their own! We will also be distributing to Tibetan Sunday schools in the UK and other Tibetan schools in India and Nepal.

You can buy your own copy, or donate one to a child, via our online shop, where you can also purchase *The Fabric of Tibet* book:

www.enlightenedgifts.org/the-fabric-of-tibet-colouring-book



Photos: Children at Sambhota Tibetan Schools in Manali and Arlikumari, India

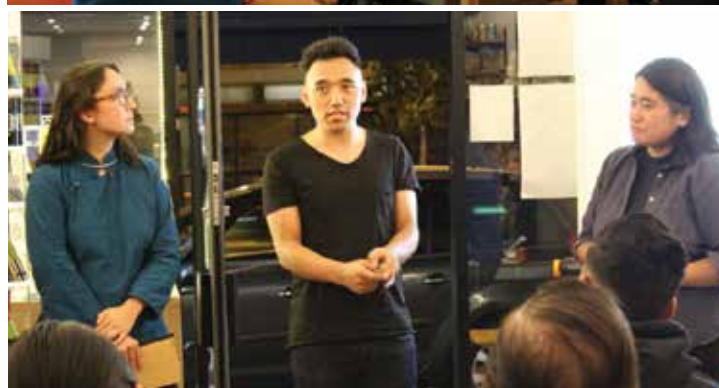


We were made for home: an evening of Tibetan poetry

Late last year we hosted a moving celebration of Tibetan poetry at our local bookshop, Burley Fisher. We welcomed four Tibetan poets and speakers to share their work and take part in a fascinating discussion of Tibet's poetic past, present and future.

First up was Dechen Pemba, the editor of High Peaks Pure Earth. Her website translates contemporary poetry and writings from inside Tibet and the People's Republic of China, providing an invaluable link between Tibetans in exile and those still living in Tibet. Following Dechen, scholar Darig K. Thokmay treated us to beautiful readings in both Tibetan and English.

After Skyping with Dhondup, a poet based in Paris whose work reflects on refugee identity, the evening was rounded off by a reading from Lekey Leidecker, an activist and poet from Washington DC. The final line of her poem *Refuge* gave the event its name – “we were made for home” – and its poignant message sparked discussions that kept the bookshop packed until past closing time!



Photos: Lekey Leidecker, Darig K. Thokmay and Dechen Pemba, courtesy of Anna Tsomo Leidecker

Sponsorship stories

Thank you to all of you who sponsor an elder, child, monk or nun through Tibet Relief Fund.

We are so grateful to everyone who has contributed through the years. Your invaluable support has helped us equip thousands of Tibetans with education, clean water, healthcare and housing; giving hope and peace of mind to generations!

2019 is a milestone year for Tibet Relief Fund as we celebrate 60 years working with Tibetans. To mark this anniversary, on 31 July (our 60th "birthday"), we are launching **60 Lives**, an exciting new sponsorship initiative! This is an ambitious venture to find 60 new sponsorships for Tibetans in need. We hope this insight into our programme inspires you to help us make this a reality!



Photos: Tibetan Children's Village, Bylakuppe

Why sponsorship matters

Tibet Relief Fund works with ten agencies across India and Nepal to sponsor Tibetans in need, from elders, children and students to monks and nuns. Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) is one of our partner agencies. Founded in 1960 to provide care for destitute Tibetan children living in exile, it has schools in Ladakh and north and south India. At their school in Bylakuppe in south India, 75 children are sponsored through Tibet Relief Fund.

Nyima Thakchoe, Sponsorship Secretary at the school explains why sponsorship is so important ...

“Sponsorship is a wonderful and fulfilling experience. By sponsoring one of our children, you will help cover our yearly expenses for tuition, staffing and classroom amenities; giving our children the start they deserve in life.

We aim to equip every child with an education that will allow them to flourish and thrive in the modern world, yet is still rich in Tibetan values, preserving Tibet's cultural heritage and identity. An identity they can all be proud of. Thank you.”

A day in the life: Jamyang Choling nunnery, Dharamsala

Tibet's unique culture and religion is in great danger or being stamped out under China's occupation. By sponsoring nuns and monks studying in exile you are helping to preserve Tibetan Buddhist practices and beliefs. Below, Drukmo tells us about her daily life and education, made possible by her sponsor:



“Life for us begins at 5:30 with morning prayer and meditation. After breakfast we enjoy the first class of the day: Buddhist philosophy and Tibetan grammar which is my favourite part of the day. In the afternoon, English and Hindi classes happen before Tara prayers and self-study in the latter hours.

A structured routine of study is an integral part of our lives, however prayer and meditation are just as important. The balance of these two practices creates a meaningful harmony for us. My life is a blissful one. I always keep in my mind His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teaching of not harming any other living being and to be kind to everyone. I try as much as possible to implement this into my practice.”



Why we sponsor

Tibetan Homes Foundation in Uttarakhand, north India runs three schools and two homes for the elderly. Tibetan Community UK North Association sponsor a little girl, Tenzin Pema, and an elder, Mrs Kalsang, both of whom live at Tibetan Homes ...

“It is important to us all in the community that we sponsor both an elderly person and a child. Often the older generation are overlooked and most sponsorship money goes towards the youth and education. In our eyes both are equally as important.

Our community regularly fundraises to continue these sponsorships, and we are working hard to be able to sponsor more people in the future.

All Tibetans at some point in our lives have thrived from the generosity of others and His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, therefore it is vital that Tibetans continue to help other Tibetans.”

- Chodak Hunter, Tibetan Community UK North Association

If you have been inspired by these stories and want to start your own sponsorship journey, turn the page to read about four Tibetans whose lives could be changed through sponsorship ...



Sponsorship

As you have just been reading, our sponsorship programme helps support hundreds of Tibetans across India and Nepal and continues to bring a sense of hope to those living in exile.

As a sponsor you will receive regular updates and photos from your sponsored individual, as well as being able to exchange letters or cards.

If you're considering becoming a sponsor, the individuals here are all in urgent need of your support.

How To Sponsor

If you would like to sponsor any of these Tibetans and make a real difference to their lives, please contact Terri:

Call: 020 3119 0041

Email: sponsorship@tibetrelieffund.co.uk

You can also find out more or sponsor online at www.tibetrelieffund.co.uk/startsponsoring

Sponsorship costs £200/year or just £16.75/month.

Thank you.



Kunga Choesang

Kunga is six years old and one of the newest admissions to his monastic school in Nepal. His mother passed away when he was only three and he was admitted to school early as his father couldn't care for him. Known as "small one", Kunga is keen to show what he lacks in height, he makes up for in personality! He is currently in a preparatory class but with sponsorship he can look forward to starting "big school" soon.



Tenzin Kunjung

Tenzin is five and lives in Madikeri, south west India. After his parents' divorce, Tenzin's grandmother tried to look after him but due to her failing health was unable to care for him independently. He was admitted into a nearby school in Bylakuppe on the grounds of destitution. By sponsoring Tenzin you will give him the gift of a secure education and a brighter future.



Mrs Dolma

Mrs Dolma and her five siblings fled Tibet in the early 1970s and settled in Pokhara, Nepal. Now 81 and sadly widowed, Mrs Dolma spends her time in religious practice and enjoys sewing but has limited financial resources. Sponsorship will ensure she doesn't have to worry about supporting herself and can enjoy her later years in peace and comfort.



Tenzin Chozom

Tenzin, 22, was born in the remote Zanskar valley region of Ladakh but has since found her calling as a nun at Jamyang Choling near Dharamsala. A studious and devoted pupil, she is committed to promoting Buddhist values and harmony in the world. Sponsorship would enable Tenzin to continue to follow her vocation by covering her food, lodging, education and provide her a small monthly stipend.



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Chair: Philip Wilson
CEO: Philippa Carrick
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