

TIBET MATTERS

Issue 42 | SUMMER 2023

Tashi delek

Welcome to your summer issue of *Tibet Matters*. We are proud to bring you more stories of the life-changing work your continued support has made possible, as well as tell you about future plans for practical, sustainable solutions to challenges faced by the Tibetan exile community.

We are also delighted to share the heart-warming story of two of our sponsors, and the young Tibetans whose lives have been changed by their generosity. If you're inspired, turn to page 12 to find out how to sponsor an individual, or even a whole community!

There are lots of other ways to get involved in our work, including shopping for unique gifts and handicrafts in our online shop at: enlightenedgifts.org. You can get a glimpse of what goes on behind the scenes on page 6.

Your tireless support and compassion for Tibetan communities is so inspiring. Without you, none of our work would be possible. Thank you.

Philippa Carrick

Philippa Carrick, CEO

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Building healthier, stronger communities

Inadequate and limited access to healthcare leads to higher rates of disease, illness, and avoidable deaths among the Tibetan exile population. With your support, we are working with a number of organisations to change this.

Emergency medical funds

Thanks to you, we have established emergency funds for several partner organisations in India and Nepal. These give vital support to those who otherwise couldn't afford timely medical treatment.

Many members of the Tibetan exile community don't have the means to pay for medical care. This is a particular problem for elderly or vulnerable Tibetans without support systems. The emergency medical funds cover a range of needs, including upfront costs for check ups and regular medication, prenatal care, and treatment for tuberculosis.

We are delighted to hear from Tibetan Homes Foundation that our emergency medical fund significantly reduced the strain healthcare costs put on their finances. Your donations are hard at work, providing their students and staff with treatment for a range of conditions, including cancer, epilepsy and diabetes.

Tibetan Homes Foundation resident who is receiving cancer treatment thanks to the emergency medical fund



Clear vision and a new lease of life

Thanks to your generous response to our recent appeal, several Tibetans have already had the life-changing cataract surgery and aftercare needed to restore their vision, which they otherwise would not have been able to afford. And many more will continue to benefit, as your donations mean our partners can run

the necessary screenings to catch cataracts early, and operate before it is too late. This is a major challenge facing elderly Tibetans, who, without your support, are at risk of losing their sight forever. You have brought health and hope to those in need - thank you!

Above: Po Tsephel (third from right), spending time with his friends after his successful cataract surgery

Revitalising communities through permaculture

For exiled Tibetans living in remote and inhospitable environments, being able to grow their own food while minimising the environmental impact helps build self-sufficient and strong communities well into the future.

The two solar greenhouses constructed with your support last year meant students at Tibetan Children's Village schools in Ladakh (right) could grow enough fresh vegetables to provide themselves with a balanced, healthy diet over winter. They even had some surplus produce, which they sold within the local community - a helpful source of nutrition during the colder months!

On the heels of this success, we are exploring related projects in Nepal, at Tserok Tibetan Settlement and in Bakhang (below). With your support and working with the local people, we hope to revitalise these communities by addressing soil erosion and malnutrition through permaculture - a system of agriculture that mimics natural patterns of the ecosystem. It uses a variety of techniques to improve soil health, prevent erosion, increase crop yields, and improve community health.

Dr Roy Welford has been a generous supporter of our work in Bakhang and the surrounding areas for many years. After a recent visit, he told us:

“ There are very few green vegetables, everyone seems to live off potatoes, which is not good for micronutrients and anaemia. ”



Taking learnings from our work in Ladakh, we plan to support community members to establish greenhouses for year-round cultivation of organic vegetables, alongside training in greenhouse management and organic farming techniques.

In consultation with the Tserok community, we are exploring permaculture solutions to the problems posed by major flooding from the nearby river and irrigation difficulties, which makes it difficult for them to grow food.

Thank you for helping bring sustainable change and improved quality of life to these Tibetan communities.

International Women's Day premiere of *Makha*

A new film, *Makha* ("wound" in Tibetan), premiered on International Women's Day (8 March) in Dharamsala, in collaboration with Tibetan Women's Association (TWA). It was also screened in Tibetan settlements across India.

The film tells the story of three generations of a Tibetan family in exile and aims to raise awareness about domestic violence, child abuse, mental health and substance abuse issues.

Your support allowed us to work with Tibet Theatre on this important project. Lhakpa Tsering, founder of Tibet Theatre and director of *Makha*, explained:

“ These are common problems within Tibetan communities, but have had little public acknowledgement or discussion. Most people think women have full rights in our exile community, but in reality there are a lot of problems from the family level to society level. ”

Tsering Dolma, Vice President of TWA added:

“ The film engaged audiences across generations and grappled with issues which are often not talked about within our communities. We had good feedback and discussions among audiences. ”



Artistic Reverie: Showcasing the beauty of Tibetan culture

Tibet's unique culture is being systematically wiped out within Tibet, leading to the potential extinction of the country's heritage and tradition.

We recently worked with three emerging Tibetan artists to mount an exhibition, *Artistic Reverie* - a contemporary response to Tibetan culture.

The artists' paintings, sculptures and mixed media pieces, explore themes including nomadic life and Tibetan Buddhism, and combine identifiable Tibetan motifs with strikingly modern artistic techniques.

Held at KA Art Gallery, Varanasi, India, the exhibition was a great success. With 200 visitors leaving feedback, *Artistic Reverie* provided a platform for dialogue, cultural exchange and inspiration. Thank you for helping preserve and promote Tibet's endangered culture.

Above and far left: Ngwang Dhargyal
Left: Tenzin Choegyal

Coming Together to Celebrate Tibetan History, Culture and Resilience

Spring 2023 brought with it two remarkable events, which we had the pleasure of hosting alongside brilliant partners. A huge thank you to everyone who joined us and made both occasions so special.

Never Forget Tibet

In March, we had the privilege to co-host the UK premiere of *Never Forget Tibet* - a documentary by Compassionate Films, narrated by Hugh Bonneville. This film delves into the invaluable teachings of Tibetan culture and its ancient spirituality, exploring their potential application in the modern world. Given the dwindling coverage of the situation for Tibetans in mainstream media, it was wonderful to get a rare chance to bring this message to a wider audience.

Special thanks to Komodo for helping make the evening possible, to Sadie Frost for expertly chairing the enlightening Q&A session, and to Dr Deepak Chopra for leading a guided meditation on peace before the screening.



Sadie Frost, Dr Deepak Chopra, and the film's director Jean-Paul Mertinez during the Q&A



The Panchen Lama's 34th Birthday Party

In April, we welcomed the monks from the re-established Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, the seat of the Panchen Lamas in India, for a joyous celebration of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's birthday. He has not been seen for 28 years, since his abduction in 1995 at age six, which made him the world's youngest political prisoner.

The monks crafted an intricate sand Peace Mandala which was ceremonially destroyed as part of the event, symbolising the ephemeral nature of life and existence (below left). It was fantastic to see so many Tibet supporters and members of the Tibetan community come together to mark his birthday, including our friends at Tibet Kitchen at nearby Spitalfields who provided delicious momos!



Behind the scenes at Enlightened Gifts

Every time you shop on enlightenedgifts.org you support our work with the Tibetan community in India and Nepal. Here we're excited to take you behind the scenes ...

Stocking up

The process starts with sourcing products. Twice a year, we place large orders through our Project Liaison Officers: Penpa in Nepal and TenNyima in India. They do a brilliant job scouring local markets and coordinating all the items. We are fortunate to have wonderful suppliers, including Tibetan-run businesses, so we can offer you all sorts of unique and ethical products.

It is always exciting when the merchandise arrives, as we get to see new products we are testing, as well as all your returning favourites. Everything is counted in and organised in our stockroom.

Your orders make an impact

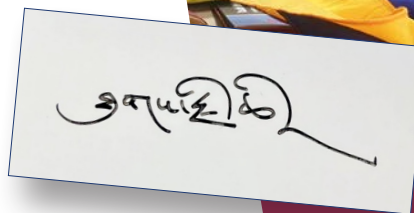
Of course, the best part is receiving your orders, which raise funds for our work.

Rinchen handles your orders daily, processing and packing them in time for the Royal Mail collection. He includes a handwritten thank you in Tibetan (right), and an additional handwritten thanks to those of you who generously donate at checkout.

Our Christmas catalogue

The busiest time of the year is Christmas. This starts with our catalogue, which is beautifully created by Nyima, and highlights our best sellers and new items. In October, when the catalogue arrives with you, orders start flooding in; during the next eight weeks we process over 650 orders!

Thank you to all our customers - you are making a real difference!



Sustainability

We endeavour to be plastic-free wherever possible: our sellotape and brown tape are plastic-free and use natural glues. Our packaging is mostly paper or compostable postal bags.



Follow Enlightened Gifts on Instagram [@enlightenedgiftsuk](https://www.instagram.com/enlightenedgiftsuk) to be first to see new products and access special deals!

Did you know?

The Himalayas separate Tibet from the Indian subcontinent, and is home to several famous mountains, including Everest, the highest peak on Earth. However, the most sacred mountain in Tibet is **Mount Kailash** ...



Mount Kailash

Mount Kailash is located in the far west of Tibet, in the Ngari region of Ü-Tsang province.

In Tibet's native Bon religion, Kailash is believed to be where its founder, Tonpa Shenrab, came to Tibet and began to preach. It is also thought to be the axis mundi - the axis between the Earth's poles connecting it to heaven and the underworld.

Kailash is also sacred for Buddhists, who know it as Mount Meru, the central world-mountain of Buddhist cosmology.

Hindus believe it is the home of the deity Shiva in his benevolent ascetic form, while Jains know it as the location of the first thirtankara (teacher of the dharma)'s spiritual liberation from samsara (the repeating cycle of death and rebirth).

Given its remote location and unforgiving terrain, making a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash is an arduous undertaking. Yet for thousands of years, followers of these four religions have made the journey, believing that circumambulating Kailash on foot will bring good fortune and religious merit.

Due to its importance as a site of religious significance, mountaineers have never climbed Kailash. In the 1980s Reinhold Messner, the Italian mountaineer who was first to make a solo ascent of Everest, was given permission by the Chinese government to climb Mount Kailash. Messner declined, later saying:

“ If we conquer this mountain, then we conquer something in people's souls. ”



Statue of Shiva in his Mount Kailash home

Get Involved

We are forever blown away by the generosity of our supporters - however you've shown your support, your contributions create lasting change in the lives of Tibetans. Thank you.

Particular thanks to everyone involved in our 2023 raffle, especially to all the wonderful organisations who donated prizes, and congratulations again to all our winners this year!

Get involved and embrace the power to forge a brighter future - it's in your hands! Need some inspiration? Here's a few ideas to get you started:



Ignite change, one month at a time, by setting up a regular gift

By setting up a monthly donation, you will provide essential support for critical projects, delivering access to healthcare and clean water, life-changing education, skills training and sustainable agriculture. In just a few clicks, you can ignite change and transform lives: tibetrelieffund.co.uk/hopegivers

Inspire others while raising funds

Your enthusiasm can inspire a movement. Organise a fundraiser, challenge others, run a meditation session, or host a Tibetan dinner party. By mobilising your network, you can raise funds, raise awareness, and foster a community dedicated to making a difference.

Have an idea? Share it with us at: fundraising@tibetrelieffund.co.uk - we'd love to hear from you!



Pandhra Mile Tibetan Settlement, India

Give a Gift of Hope

Looking for a life-changing and inspiring gift to give your friend or relative to mark a special occasion? Give a Gift of Hope, and your gift will keep working long after the festivities are over.

Every gift comes with a thank you letter and photo, enclosed in an envelope made by the Clean Upper Dharamsala project. Visit: enlightenedgifts.org/virtual-gifts to browse our selection of gifts.

Harness your Will power

One in seven of our life-changing projects is funded through gifts in Wills. We think that's amazing. If you've already pledged a gift in your Will, thank you! These gifts not only address immediate challenges in communities, but also ensure long-term support for Tibetans to survive and thrive, long into the future.

Ready to write your Will? Check out our free Will writing service at: tibetrelieffund.co.uk/willpower

For any questions or to speak with our friendly team, contact: legacies@tibetrelieffund.co.uk



Corporate support

If you run a business or are employed by a company committed to making a positive difference in the world, join forces with Tibet Relief Fund, and you can play a vital role in transforming lives, strengthening communities, and fostering change. There are so many ways employees and companies can get involved with our work. Get in touch at: natalia@tibetrelieffund.co.uk to request a corporate partnership pack and start the conversation.

Give today to transform tomorrow

When an individual gets the support they need, it's the start of something life-changing.

Do something amazing today and donate to our appeal.

Scan the QR code above or visit: tibetrelieffund.co.uk/appeal to give a gift that could help a Tibetan chart a path towards a better future.



Tenzin Pema, Tibet Relief Fund training course graduate

Our sponsorship journey continues

We began sponsoring 12 years ago – Tenzin and Choekyi from 2011, and Karma from 2016. Over the years, we kept in touch with them through letters, emails, photos and visits to Nepal.

In 2013, we met Choekyi and Tenzin in Pokhara, and in 2018, Tenzin in Kathmandu. You might remember reading about these trips in previous issues of Tibet Matters!

All three have achieved success. Choekyi is furthering his Buddhist studies in Mundgod Monastery in south India. Karma completed her nursing degree in India and is back working in her home community, Tashi Palkhiel.

Here, Tenzin tells you her story:



Tenzin outside her office

Dharamsala. I had never been to Dharamsala before so I was really excited. I never imagined the place would have so many exciting things in store for me. Dharamsala was a big turning point for me.

In January 2022 I had an examination and interview for a job at the CTA. There were around 70 applicants for only six vacancies. I thought it would be impossible to make it, but, to my surprise, I got a call one day congratulating me on being selected. For one second, I couldn't believe I had made it. It was literally the most exciting moment – my first official job as CTA staff.

I am now the accountant and secretary at Tashi Palkhiel Tibetan Settlement, Pokhara. We also have two remote settlements, Mustang and Dhorpatan, under our jurisdiction. As a secretary, my job entails all clerical work, and as an accountant, I look after the accounts of all three settlements, including the kindergarten, primary school, hostel and carpet showroom. So it's always a busy day at work. My most recent work was to visit remote Tibetan communities. The settlements were reached

“ After graduating with a degree in Business Administration, I worked at a paragliding shop in Pokhara for two years. I learned about the business and met paragliders from different corners of the world, before I moved to Bangalore. There, I completed my masters in Commerce (Finance and Accounting) which wouldn't have been possible without the generous help from Carole and Neil who I consider no less than my parents.

I then learned of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)'s training course in



Last year we booked a trek in Nepal - a perfect opportunity to see Tenzin and Karma in Tashi Palkhiel. Tenzin gave us a tour that Karma joined, meeting us for the first time. It was gratifying to see how confident and relaxed Tenzin was in her official capacity and that she had already made her mark in the community.

We spent the evening at Tenzin's parents' home in nearby Tashi Ling where we shared momos, tukpa, butter tea, lots of laughs and memories of our last meeting nine years ago!

As a reward for her achievements, Tenzin joined us for three days in Chitwan National Park, a completely new experience for her. We revelled in luxury accommodation, superb food, animal jeep rides, bird-spotting walks and a sunset punt on the river. A perfect end to a wonderful visit.

Sponsoring has been such a significant and rewarding part of our lives. Surely we will visit Nepal again soon!

Above: Carole, Karma, Tenzin and Neil
Below: Carole with Tenzin and her family

Tenzin on the road to visit remote Tibetan settlements



by 4x4s and on horseback, an exciting new experience for me!

As busy as it might get, I feel blessed to work as a member of the CTA staff and play my small part to serve my community. ”

If Carole and Neil's sponsorship journey has inspired you, turn the page to read about two Tibetans whose lives you can change with the gift of sponsorship!

Sponsorship

Every year our sponsorship programme helps hundreds of Tibetans across India and Nepal live in safety and security with access to education and healthcare.

Sponsorship is a life-changing gift and a chance to build meaningful connections.

Mrs Sichoe

Mrs Sichoe was born in Tibet but now lives in exile at an old people's home in Pokhara, Nepal. Before retirement, she worked in handicraft centres, spinning wool and weaving carpets. Described as a kind, helpful woman who speaks her mind, Mrs Sichoe is a widow with no children and meagre savings. Please sponsor her today and help her live out her retirement in comfort and security.



Tenzin

11-year-old Tenzin was also born in Tibet. Now at school in north India, she is determined to make her parents, who live on the Tibet-Nepal border, proud. Tenzin enjoys learning English and is often top of her class, as she studies hard in the hope of one day becoming a doctor. She also loves playing and spending time with her best friend Tsedzom. Sponsor Tenzin today and help her follow her dreams.



Silent Sponsorship

From **£5 a month**, you can drive positive change in an entire school or community. With your sponsorship, you will help provide every student, every individual, with the vital resources and opportunities they need to thrive, ensuring no Tibetan is ever left behind.

Find out more at:
tibetrelieffund.co.uk/silent-sponsorship

How to sponsor

Sponsorship costs **£30 a month**, or **£360 a year**. If you would like to sponsor Mrs Sichoe or Tenzin, or set up a Silent Sponsorship, please email our Sponsorship Coordinator, Amber, at: sponsorship@tibetrelieffund.co.uk or write to **Sponsorship Coordinator, Tibet Relief Fund, 99 Kentish Town Road, London, NW1 8PB**

To find out more visit:
tibetrelieffund.co.uk/be-a-sponsor
Thank you.



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