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Tibetan Friendship Group Australia (Inc.)

Patrons: His Holiness the Dalai Lama  
Joan M Wilson OAM

## TFG CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2020

Tashi Delek! Here we are at the end of 2020 - a year we won't forget! As we reflect on the year that has passed and all the problems Covid-19 has caused in our own lives we can also think of others much worse off than ourselves.

For those of you who sponsor a Tibetan child, nun, elder, performing arts student or who donate to TFG you can feel that at least you are directly helping someone in need.

India in particular has suffered from the effects of Covid-19 and now has 9.46 million cases. Fortunately, according to a recent Reuters tally, the number of new daily cases has stayed below the 50,000 mark since November 7 despite a busy festival season last month. Due to stringent controls in the Tibetan Settlements we support, they have managed to avoid the pandemic.

### TFG NEWS

As stated in TFG's President's Report, we at TFG are endeavouring to keep up with the times and hold our meetings via video conferencing. This has been quite successful although not as much fun!! We have been unable to hold any special fundraising events this year due to Covid-19 but hope that will change in 2021. The TFG AGM was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November via video-conference and all volunteers kindly offered to continue in the same positions.

Special thanks go to TFG Patron, Joan Wilson for facilitating the sale of carpets donated to TFG from the estate of Margaret Huenerbein, a long time TFG supporter. The sale raised over \$700 for TFG's projects.

Thanks also to our Vice-president, Tara Mahapatra for her work with the TFG website. The website has received over 100.000 hits since 2018 and has attracted new sponsors and several donations.

Our hardworking volunteer treasurer, Choekyi, presented the Financial Report at the AGM. We are delighted to report that a total of **\$22,733.00** was transferred to the Settlements for the period July 2019 to June 2020.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2020

2020 has been an unprecedented and challenging year due to the global pandemic, Covid-19. We deeply hope that everyone is staying safe and healthy and coping during these uncertain and difficult times.

We very much appreciate the kindness of our sponsors and donors, who continue to support TFG. Please know that all donations and sponsorships have provided significant help to Tibetans in need. The settlements TFG supports are eternally grateful to continue to have support during these incredibly difficult times.

We have been in continual communication with the settlements and have been kept up to date with their situations. The settlements work tirelessly to help the Tibetans, and our thoughts are always with them.

I wish to also extend my gratitude to the TFG committee, who continue to volunteer their time to support the TFG. These people are the foundation of the TFG, and without them we would not be able to operate. We have held our meetings through video conference, and have found this to be quite efficient.

This year we have tried to streamline our processes. For example, we have started sending out our newsletters to all subscribers using an online platform. This means that our supporters receive a personalised email from the TFG, and it is a more efficient process for connecting with our supporters. We are also working on making updates to the website, and are using the website to receive PayPal donations.

I deeply hope that everyone continues to stay safe and healthy, and that these difficult times pass. We are so grateful for the support of all the donors, sponsors, volunteers and friends of the TFG.

Tashi Dorjee  
President TFG  
November 2020





**NOELENE IN TIBETAN DRESS**

### **VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT**

In this Newsletter we feature long-time TFG volunteer, Noelene Snyder. Noelene is Settlement Secretary for Jamyang Choling Nunnery and Sambhota Tibetan School's Society. Noelene says:

*"I travelled to Tibet in 2007 and learned so much about the history, people and culture of this beautiful, remote, mountainous country. I was given a wonderful opportunity to become a mentor to a Tibetan Monk who had been living in exile in India. He had just arrived to live on the Northern Beaches in Sydney, within the established Tibetan Community. This experience has enabled me to meet many local Tibetan people, and to become involved with the Community and attend their annual Losar and HH The Dalai Lama's birthday celebrations. I have also found much satisfaction in volunteering for TFG and knowing that in some small way I can help Tibetans in need."*

Thank you, Noelene for being part of the TFG family!

## **TIBETAN SETTLEMENTS IN INDIA SUPPORTED BY TFG**

### **DELEK HOSPITAL**

The Delek Hospital was built in 1971 with the approval and blessing of H.H. the Dalai Lama. Although under the auspices of the Tibetan Health organisation it is autonomous in its administration and funding. This is its Mission Statement:

*We at Delek Hospital are committed to serve all those who come to us despite their gender, race, religion, country of origin or socioeconomic status. We treat all people in a compassionate and respectful manner, providing them with the finest treatment commensurate with our resources.*



Treating a patient at Delek Hospital

## GAMPOPA CLINIC

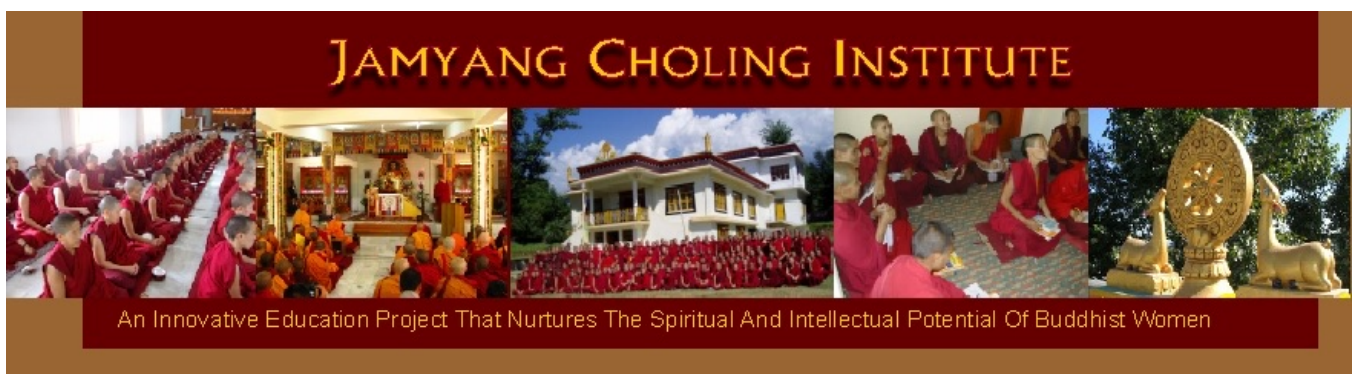
Gampopa Clinic was established by the Monastery, Druk Toupten Sangag Choeling in 1994 with the help of a number of sponsors and since then the clinic sees everyone who needs help. It was built to service a community of more than 60,000 inhabitants (mostly Tibetan refugees) living at Dali, 5km from Darjeeling. The medicines are allopathic and Tibetan and free to those who cannot afford to pay.



## JAMYANG CHOLING INSITUTE

Words from a young nun, who attained her Geshe degree, on her origins:

*"I was born in the Zaskar Valley of Ladakh, a tiny area high in the Himalayas of Northern India. I have five sisters and two brothers, and I lived until the age of 13 with my family there. From the age of 6 or 7, my sister and I would go to the mountain in the summer to look after the family's animals—sheep, goats, cows, horses, donkeys, and dzomos (a yak-cattle hybrid). Sometimes we'd work the fields. Most of the Zanskari people are farmers. We would have a nomad camp with the animals on the mountain in in summer, then keep the animals at home in the long winter."*



An Innovative Education Project That Nurtures The Spiritual And Intellectual Potential Of Buddhist Women

## LHA CHARITABLE TRUST

Lha comprises many different local and international contributors. The organization is managed by local Tibetan refugees who draw their expertise from first-hand knowledge of living in exile. To supplement staff efforts, Lha is aided by volunteers and generous donors from around the world.

Lha has many special projects such as the Clean Water Project which focuses on the provision of clean water at identified areas of need in Dharamsala and The Soup Kitchen Project providing nutritious meals to those in need. Funds are always in short supply!



## PURUWALA (SAKYA TIBETAN SOCIETY)

News from the Puruwala Settlement is that it is becoming cooler there every day. They are very concerned about the pandemic as it has affected their seasonal business so that they are suffering financially. Large stocks of sweaters etc for the Winter season were lost in the recent devastating fires so those inhabitants who work as sweater sellers in the mountain villages in Winter have lost their income. Heartfelt thanks to our generous TFG supporter who recently donated \$1000. The General Secretary, Tenzing Kunga passes on this message:

*“Christmas is near, hoping and pray that Christmas be celebrate without mask. May all the year ahead will fill with lots of love, happiness and peace.”*



## **SAMBHOTA TIBETAN SCHOOL SOCIETY**

Sambhota Tibetan School Society was formed in 1999 and is managed by the Department of Education, Dharamsala India. Sambhota primarily provides education to many underprivileged children living in remote areas of India.

In 2020 the children have been living at home with their families and "home schooling" due to the very difficult situation of Covid 19. This puts many of them at a disadvantage due to remote locations and poor internet connection. They are very grateful to all their generous sponsors, as there are many needy children requiring assistance with education.



Mrs Sonam Sangmo, head of Scholarship and Sponsorship Section of the Dept of Education expresses her gratitude to all sponsors and sends her apologies that students are unable to send personal greetings this year due to the pandemic.

## **TIBETAN HOMES FOUNDATION**

Here is a lovely quote from General Secretary Karma Chungdak:

*"We want our children not only to reach sky-high in their academics but also be able to flower and become good human beings. Therefore, we need to divert more of our energy into the holistic growth of our children and keep guiding them in order to bring out the best in them."*



## TILOKPUR NUNNERIES

Tilokpur Nunneries are part of a group of Nunneries called The Tibetan Nuns Project. After 1959, when many Tibetans fled Tibet, the large monastic institutions were re-established in exile. Far fewer nuns came out. Slowly institutions were established for the nuns, but just as the nuns in Tibet didn't have education, neither did the new nunneries in India. That was the situation when the Tibetan Nuns Project started out.

Here is an excerpt from an interview with Dr Elizabeth Napper, US founder of the Tibetan Nuns Project:

**Q: What were some of the obstacles to setting up an education program for the nuns?**

**A:** *It was tricky because it wasn't easy to find teachers. Also, the nunneries were dependent upon the financial support they got from the lay community coming for prayers, and those prayers took up the better part of the nuns' days. They were concerned that if they set up a study program and nuns weren't doing prayers all day the nunneries wouldn't get in enough funding to support them. So that was a big part of the sponsorship program that we started – to provide alternative support so that everyone wouldn't have to spend all day doing prayers on behalf of the lay community – not that they weren't willing to do those prayers, but we needed to find a way to make it not be the only thing for them to do. That was the starting point.*

**Q: What are some of the major accomplishments in education for the nuns so far?**

**A:** *The result of educating nuns is that we now have nuns who have been trained up to the point of the highest degree of their tradition, the Geshe degree (Geshema degree for the nuns).*

*Some of the major educational accomplishments are:*

- *The creation of ground-breaking education program for nuns*
- *Providing debate training for nuns for the first time in the history of Tibet*
- *Supporting the annual Jang Gonchoe inter-nunnery debate event, which provides one month of intensive training in debate*
- *Enabling nuns to take the Geshema exams and pursue other higher degrees*
- *Creating a Tantric Studies program for Geshemas to empower them to become teachers and leaders*



Nuns receiving Geshema degrees

*In 2016, twenty nuns made history when they were awarded the Geshema degree. This degree is equivalent to a PhD in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and was only formally opened up to women in 2012.*

## **TIBETAN INSTITUTE OF PERFORMING ARTS (TIPA)**

Report on Children's Day in November

*Children's day in India is celebrated on November 14 of every year as a tribute to India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who was fond of children because he considered them to be the real strength of a country and foundation of society. Here at TIPA, Children's Day is famously celebrated as Students' Day. This year, the day was celebrated on time with the distribution of exciting gifts and by indulging in funny team building games. The three groups of Potala, YumbuLakhang and Samye competed well for the trophies.*

*The sky on the day was overcast, but proved favorable for the games. Martin Scorsese's 1997 film, Kunden, was screened in the afternoon for those who didn't play Tambula game. A scrumptious meal was served on the day by staff members. In the evening, they were entertained with a variety of performances. The presentation of a soulful act by Gen Sonam Tsering, left many spotted looking teary-eyed after the enactment.*



## **TIBETAN REFUGEE SELF-HELP CENTRE (TRSHC)**

During COVID-19, The Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre (TRSCH) has continued to care for the elderly residents who are entirely dependent on the Centre by providing free housing, food and medical care. Many of the older people are also skilled craftsman and women and have continued to be involved in a program in 2020 to teach younger Tibetan their traditional skills and at the same time maintain meaningful connections with younger Tibetan people at the Centre.

The support provided by the TFG sponsors in assisting the elderly TRSCH is greatly appreciated. Sponsors will be receiving a written update on their resident and a photo of the elderly person they sponsor in late December or January.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 prevented the TFG settlement secretary from visiting TRSHC in 2020 as planned, to visit the elderly residents sponsored by TFG and the health facilities.

The provision of heavily subsidized and free medicines is a continuing drain on the Centres resources and finances. TRSCH welcomes donations to ensure this humanitarian service can continue for both Tibetan and Indian people who live in and around Darjeeling. If you would like to sponsor one of the elderly people at the TRSCH or make a donation to the medical program please contact the TRSCH Settlement Secretary.

Cathy can be contacted at [CathyTFGaustralia@gmail.com](mailto:CathyTFGaustralia@gmail.com). Cathy can also be contacted weekends or after 7pm week days on 0401 393 051.



## TIBETAN REFUGEE SELF HELP CENTRE AT DARJEELING



### TIBETAN CHILDREN'S VILLAGE (TCV)

TCV continues to operate despite the difficulties of the pandemic. Many children have had to study from home, which has put some at a disadvantage.

From Thupten Dorjee President, TCV:

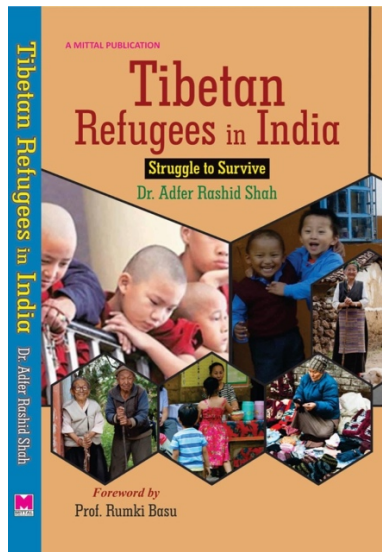
*Since my last letter dated 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020, I am happy to inform all our sponsors, donor organizations, friends and well-wishers of TCV that our children and co-workers continue to stay safe and sound with around 900 children in all our branches. At the same time, we say our prayers for all lives lost and many more who continue to suffer, for speedy recovery and that this unprecedented disease to pass out at the earliest and life brought back to normal.*



### YOUNG CHILDREN AT TCV

More sponsors are always needed! Some children do not have parents or have parents who work in remote locations.

Please contact TFG if you would like more information.



Here's a new book which may interest you. Maybe a Christmas present?  
Suggested by our Settlement Secretary,  
Lesley Stronach.

*From all of us at TFG we wish you and your families Health and Happiness during the Festive Season and for the year to come in 2021*

#### **CONTACT DETAILS**

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EMAIL: [tfgpresident@gmail.com](mailto:tfgpresident@gmail.com)

WEBSITE: [www.tfg.org.au](http://www.tfg.org.au)

#### **PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR DONATIONS**

CHEQUE: PAYABLE TO TIBETAN FRIENDSHIP GROUP AUSTRALIA (INC)

DIRECT DEPOSIT: CBA BSB: 062 173 ACCOUNT NO: 2802 0635

PAYPAL: VIA WEBSITE