

YEAR 2023

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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Lha Charitable Trust

Institute for Social Work and Education

PREPARED BY:
TSERING WANGDUE





DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear everyone,

I am delighted to present the annual report for the year 2023. This past year has proven to be another resounding success, marked by moments of joy, positive transformations, and significant impacts on numerous lives. We executed a total of 15 distinct programs throughout the year, with the dedicated efforts of over 150 volunteers contributing to our collective achievements.

Working alongside such a committed team of staff members and volunteers has been both a pleasure and a source of inspiration. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each one of you.

A special thank you goes out to our sponsors, donors, and partner organizations. Your unwavering support, belief, and encouragement have been instrumental in our accomplishments. Without your generosity, we wouldn't have been able to undertake such a monumental task.

As we look ahead, our commitment remains steadfast in providing essential services to those in need, particularly the most vulnerable members of our community. I urge all of you to continue supporting and inspiring us in our mission to deliver these vital and noble services.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey.

TSERING WANGDUE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BACKGROUND



Since 1959, hundreds of thousands of Tibetans have chosen to leave their homeland in pursuit of the freedoms and opportunities denied under the Chinese communist occupation. Every year, new refugees arrive in India after an arduous journey, carrying only an armful of personal belongings. Countless refugees arrive with little or no education, speaking only Tibetan, and possessing no viable job skills to support themselves and their families. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult for adults and older refugees to receive an adequate education in India due to their school system requirements. Founded in 1997 and registered as a charitable trust by the Himachal Pradesh Indian Government in 2005, Lha has continuously provided vital resources to those in need for 26 years. Lha's financial accounts are audited annually by a government-approved chartered accountant. Lha plays a crucial role in facilitating the transition of Tibetan refugees from their homeland to the Indian community by providing long-term rehabilitation and education resources. Each year, programs and projects are adjusted to meet the conditions and needs of the community, while keeping the commitment firm: to help the Tibetan people survive and prosper in their new home and to preserve their profoundly unique culture. All Lha's services are open to local Indians and people from the Himalayan regions. In addition, Lha offers volunteers and students the opportunity to engage in meaningful community service and social work.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Our Vision

To generate an atmosphere of harmony and cooperation within the community by meeting the needs of the impoverished and underprivileged.

Our Mission

- To provide a wide range of social services to Tibetan refugees, local Indians, and people from the Himalayan region.
- To provide Tibetan refugees with health care and educational services, as well as the skills and assistance needed to build a new life in exile.
- To facilitate meaningful mutual learning and cultural exchange experiences among Tibetans, volunteers, and students who visit from other countries.
- To increase awareness of the Tibetan refugee situation and preserve the endangered culture of Tibet.

AREAS OF FOCUS

Educational Programs

Social Work Programs

Volunteer Opportunities

Cultural Exchange Programs

Preservation and Promotion of Tibetan Language and Culture



Our volunteer James teaching his English Class

INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE CLASSES

Lha has been providing language courses daily for past the 26 years. These courses constitute one of the most significant projects undertaken by Lha to enhance the life opportunities of students of all ages, backgrounds and proficiencies. Courses are offered in five languages: Tibetan, English, French, Chinese, and German, at three expertise levels: beginner, intermediate and conversational.

In 2023, a total of 333 students participated in Lha language courses including 292 Tibetan refugees and people of other Himalayan communities, 41 from other Asian countries.

A total of 14,505 students have received language instruction from Lha since its inception. In addition to daily language classes, one-to-one tutoring was made available to the interested students.

The English conversation class is one of the most effective and sought after classes with about 20 to 30 students engaging and participating daily to practice their English speaking with Lha volunteers. In addition to learning languages, bonds and friendships are created as students and volunteers interact and exchange their culture, religions, ideology, and personal histories.

INTENSIVE ENGLISH CLASS FOR GESHES AND KHENPOS

The third batch of “Intensive English Language Course for Geshes and Khenpos” in 2023 received 13 participants and 10 of them successfully completed the course.

The three-month course was especially organised for Geshe or Geshema (for women) and Khenpo who have completed the highest level of academic training in Tibetan Buddhism and who now wish to learn English. During the course, the monks had three classes from 9am to 1pm taught by three different teachers.

The classes were divided into three parts: Vocabulary and Grammar, Listening and Writing, and Reading and Speaking.

The Lha team and the students would like to sincerely thank our teachers; Ms Cynthia McGowan, Ms Maree Callaway, and Mr Kalsang Tsetan. Mr Keith Gilbert and Ms Candice Stone also helped as the substitute teachers.

Students doing a shot skid on Aesop’s fable “The Wolf and The Sheperd”



IELTS PREPARATION CLASS

The IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is a widely acknowledged English language assessment offered worldwide, assessing proficiency in listening, reading, writing, and speaking. It is predominantly utilized by individuals pursuing international education, professional accreditation, alignment with international benchmarks, and global mobility.

The course, spanning three months from July to September, was conducted by our volunteer IELTS trainer, Joanne. Twelve students initially enrolled in the course, but the final count upon completion was nine successful students. An entry test was conducted to ensure that all participants started the course at a comparable standard.

Students showing their online studying material at the beginning of the course



TIBETAN STUDENT'S EDUCATIONAL TOUR PROGRAM

Lha Charitable Trust organized an Educational Tour Program for 14 teenagers from Sambhota Tibetan School in Tenzingaon, Arunachal Pradesh, in December 2023. The program aims to provide students from remote Tibetan settlements in India more exposure to Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) functions and other Tibetan culture and political institutes in Dharamshala.

The students were introduced to the political setup and functioning of the CTA. The visits to Tibet Museum, The Library of Tibetan Works and Archive (LTWA), Norbulingka Institute and Men-Tsee-Khang (Tibetan Medical & Astrological Institute) offered the students valuable insights into different aspects of Tibetan culture, identity, and history.

Besides visiting prominent Tibetan cultural, educational and political institutions the students also got to experience the art of pottery from Dharamkot Studio. Furthermore, Geshe Lhakdor la, the director of LTWA gave a talk on Kindness and Cultivating Goodness.

Understanding the lack of opportunities to travel and to gain knowledge of Tibetan culture, especially for children from remote settlements, we believe this educational program is of immense potential benefit for our young Tibetans. It was only with financial help from generous individuals and long-time friends of Lha that we were able to implement this program. We hope to be fortunate enough to continue it in the future.



A student listening to oral history at Tibet Museum

TIBETAN WOMEN'S SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Under the Tibetan Women's Nursing Scholarship Program, Lha provided scholarships to six women pursuing higher education in nursing, aiming to empower Tibetans through access to rightful education. All the six women are from economically challenged families and are determined to achieve a higher education.

The scholarship program started in 2018, providing scholarships to six women in General Nursing. This year, we gave priority to applicants pursuing Master of Science (M.Sc.) in Nursing as only few scholarships are available for this course.



PROF. SAMDHONG RINPOCHE'S WEBSITE

Under the preservation and promotion of Tibetan Language and culture program, Lha maintains and publishes a collection of the writings, speeches, thoughts, and teachings of Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche. Lha also manages Rinpoche's YouTube channel and other social media pages where his intellectual teachings are made accessible to the general public.

In 2023 Lha collected and published 108 videos of Rinpoche's teachings and speeches on YouTube. To date, 1220 audio files have been uploaded onto Rinpoche's SoundCloud account with the number of 2472 followers.

You can find his work on the below mentioned digital platforms.

Website: www.samdhongrinpoche.com

YouTube: Samdhong Rinpoche

Facebook: His Eminence Professor Samdhong Rinpoche

Soundcloud: His Eminence Professor Samdhong Rinpoche



Samdhong Rinpoche

@samdhongrinpoche3 · 11.5K subscribers · 519 videos

This channel is an extensive collection of valuable teachings, writings, and speeches by Hi... >

samdhongrinpoche.com and 1 more link

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CHILDREN'S SUPPLY DISTRIBUTION AT GAMRU SCHOOL

To celebrate His Eminence Professor Samdhong Rinpoche's 84th Birthday, we have distributed stationery items to children at Gamru Village School in Dharamshala. These children are from underprivileged families, most of whom are migrant laborers from other Indian states whose children previously had no access to education. Gamru Village School was founded by Mr. Phillip Adams in 2003 to support these children. The school provides free education to children from migrant labourer families and runs with donations from individuals. It was a great moment for us to witness the joy, excitement, and happiness these kids experienced during this event.





LIVELIHOOD SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM

Student learning how to make cappuccino



Baked delicacies by bakery students on display

The Livelihood Skill Training Program was started in 2019 to address the unemployment issue in the Tibetan community. For the last three years, we have trained around three hundred Tibetans under various short-term skill courses. In 2023, we were able to train 107 students out of the more than 380 applicants we received. The applicants are carefully filtered and selected based on their educational qualifications, aims and

objectives, and matched to training plans. The preference has always been given to unemployed school dropouts, former monks and nuns, and the underprivileged section of the community. Out of the 107 students who have participated in our training courses, 43 students have secured a job after their training or started their own business.

The following table indicate the number of participants in each course.

No	Course	Total Student	Male	Female
1	Special Cuisine Course	22	19	3
2	Bakery Course	24	10	14
3	Tibetan Traditional Massage	7	4	3
4	Barista Course	33	18	15
5	Physical Fitness Trainer	0	0	0
6	Nail Art	6	0	6
7	Beautician	6	0	6
8	Electrician	6	6	0
9	Tibetan Traditional Wood Craving and Carpentry	1	1	0
10	Yoga Teacher Training	2	2	0
Total		107	60	47



Monks from Kirti Monastery posing for a group photo in front of newly installed water filter

CLEAN WATER PROJECT

We are delighted to announce that we are able to install a brand new water filter system in Kirti monastery in Dharamshala on April 6, 2023 under our Clean Water Project.

The water filter machine is sponsored by Madonna Dunbar in memory of her late husband Pablo Tenzin Ortega. This is the 33rd water filter system we have installed since the inception of the project. Kirti monastery is located in Dharamshala, and house over 200 monks.

Dharamshala's monsoon is heavy and tedious, which is also prone to water borne diseases.

Through these water filter systems, we aim to provide clean and safe drinking water for the residents. We also provide annual maintenance service for all the 33 water filter systems we have installed in various communities across India.

This project is made possible with the help of donations and support from individuals and organisations. On behalf of all our beneficiaries, we would like to sincerely thank our donors for their generosity.

SOLAR STREET LIGHT AT LILY TIBETAN VILLAGE

Lily Village is a small Tibetan settlement in Bir, Himachal Pradesh. The village has around 74 families with a total population of 240 people. All the residents of the village are new arrivals from Tibet. Their livelihood depends on small businesses such as food stalls and tea shops in the locality and a few families travel seasonally to sell winter sweaters.

The leadership of Lily Village requested our help to install streetlights in the village as there have been several cases of fatal accidents in the past due to lack of outdoor lighting.

We have managed to install 13 solar streetlights around the village's six 50-meter streets. Solar streetlights are both environmentally friendly and economic.

On behalf of all the residents of Lilly village Lha would like to thank all the donors and supporters for bringing light to their village ensuring safety and the well-being to the Tibetan exile community.



TIBETAN SMILES DENTAL PROGRAM

Since 2014, Lha has provided free dental care and eye care services to nuns and monks in the Dharamshala and Bir regions. In 2023, Lha arranged free dental check-ups for 33 nuns, six monks, and seven laypeople for a total of 46 people. They availed themselves of the services; including fillings, extractions, scaling and root canal treatments. We also provided them with bamboo toothbrush to each of them and doctor assisted them the proper ways to brush their teeth. In total, 1,326 Tibetan refugees and Himalayan people have benefitted from the Smile Dental Care Project.



Nuns waiting for their turn to get dental check up



Volunteers and students picking up trash on the roadside

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND AWARENESS PROGRAMS

Lha organizes monthly mass clean-ups with aim of maintaining the cleanliness and tidiness of McLeod Ganj by gathering waste from hillsides, illegal dump sites, and high-traffic areas. The concerted endeavours of our dedicated staff, volunteers, and students contribute to the success of these mass clean-ups. Additionally, we occasionally partner with the other organisations like Clean Upper Dharamshala Program from the Tibetan settlement office in Dharamshala and Waste Warriors to enhance our impact.

Since 2022, we proudly align ourselves with the Dharamshala Environment Preservation Network, a collective of individuals and organizations sharing a deep concern for environmental issues in Dharamshala. Our primary goal is to raise awareness and safeguard our environment, ensuring a healthy and prosperous future. The network, currently boasting 64 members, fosters collaboration among organizations and individuals. Hand in hand, we strive to maintain the beauty and cleanliness of our surroundings.



Cultural exchange program participants with their mutual learning partners outside Ahimsa House

CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

In June 2023, a student group from Tulane University, New Orleans, engaged in our cultural exchange and mutual learning program under the mentorship of their professor, Michael Smith, a dedicated long-term friend and supporter of Lha. During their stay, the group immersed themselves in Tibetan culture and traditions through visits to various Tibetan organizations. Furthermore, they were partnered with Tibetan students to acquire firsthand experiences and deeper insights into the rich cultural heritage.

In collaboration with the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of HHDL, we organized a Tibetan culinary experience event for 24 participants from various parts of India attending the annual Gurukul Program by the Foundation for Universal Responsibility.

The group was familiarized with the fundamental steps involved in preparing traditional Tibetan butter tea, momo, and tsampa (barley) integral components of the Tibetan culinary heritage.

A group of 20 individuals from Portugal visited Lha Charitable Trust on June 22, 2023. They engaged in a day-long event, which featured a talk by Geshe Lhakdor la.

Led by their teachers, a student group from the American School of Bombay actively engaged in Lha's three-day mutual learning program. During this period, they conducted diverse interactive group activities with Lha language students. Our Volunteer Coordinator, Kalsang Tseten la provided the students with a comprehensive overview of the NGO's objectives and its ongoing initiatives.



Our volunteer Kera painting the Lha signboard on the wall

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers are the backbone of Lha, playing a major role in carrying out the day-to-day operation of the programs. The volunteers are offered a platform to explore a new culture and tradition through their direct engagement with the Tibetan Community. In 2023 over 173 volunteers engaged with different activities, bringing the total number of volunteers from around the world for the past 26 years to 8864. Volunteers assist in many projects including story writings, teaching language courses in Tibetan, English, French, and Chinese, providing one-to-one private language tutoring and assisting in our English Conversation Class. We are immensely thankful to our volunteers for contributing to Lha and becoming more informed and engaged with the Tibetan Community.



Volunteer social gathering at Lha Ahimsa House

OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS

Lha Charitable Trust on behalf of all the beneficiaries would like to thank all the donors, volunteers, and partner organizations for all your support.

Louisiana
Himalaya
Association



NORZANG
Foundation



TAIWAN FOUNDATION
for **DEMOCRACY**

財團法人

臺灣民主基金會



Thank You

for a great 2023

Your support means a
lot for us.



18K+

People provided with clean and
safe drinking water

300+

Students participated in
Language classes

107

Students have benefitted
through the Livelihood Skill
Training Program

150

Volunteers from all around the
world contributed their services

46

Monks and nuns got
free dental care
services

100+

People participated in
cultural exchange program