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Lha Charitable Trust



LHA CHARITABLE TRUST
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL WORK & EDUCATION

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2020**

Message from the Director

Tashi Delek!

I hope and pray that you all are in good health during this unprecedented time. 2020 has been the most difficult, unpredictable and testing year for everyone. The emergence of the COVID-19 global pandemic has affected everyone's life in some way or another. At a time like this, we feel the need of each other's support the most and we have learned in the most difficult way that we need to coexist to make it through. It is exceptionally encouraging and hopeful to witness thousands of health workers, essential workers and social workers all around the world put their own life at risk to help others.

Similarly here in Dharamshala, Lha was able to provide assistance during the peak time of lockdown since March this year. Even though we had to cancel many of our regular programs, especially all our educational programs, we have been doing our best to serve the community. As a social work NGO, Lha has adjusted and reformed its programs over the 23 years since its inception to meet the needs of the community. This year especially we made many changes to our regular programs and brought in new ones to assist and support people in need.

I would like to present you with a brief report of the work that we have done in 2020. We couldn't have made it through alone, hence I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the many individuals and organizations who have supported and encouraged us throughout this time. I am also immensely proud of our committed staff and volunteers who continue to show their resilience and determination as we move to new ways of working in order to provide social services for our community.



With gratitude

Dorji Kyi

Executive Director, Lha Charitable Trust

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Background

Since 1959, hundreds of thousands of Tibetans have chosen to leave their homeland in pursuit of the freedoms and the opportunities denied under Chinese 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 strict 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 over 23 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 constant: 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

Generate an atmosphere of harmony and co-operation within the community by meeting the needs of the impoverished and underprivileged.

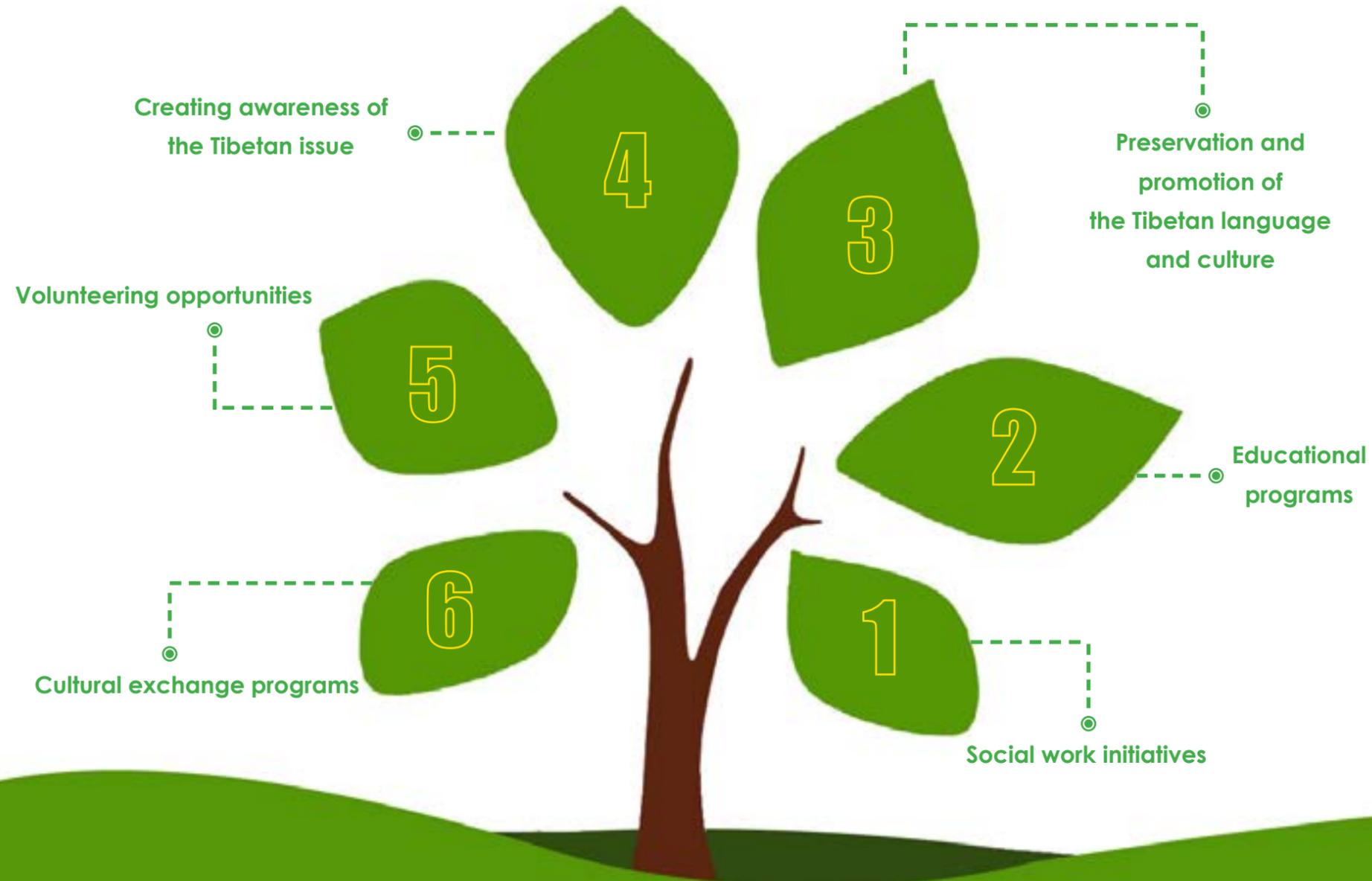


Our Mission

- 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

Lha Charitable Trust focuses its efforts on the following six areas:



Initiatives During Covid-19 Pandemic



Assisting Senior Citizens

Lha initiated a program to assist senior citizens during the peak time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lha staff and volunteers have been on the front line every day since the nationwide lockdown on March 22. Under the guidelines issued by the Indian government, elderly people above the age of 60 were strictly instructed to stay at home. Lha has been helping seniors to buy their food, medicines and necessary essentials.

While maintaining all the necessary precautions and social distancing by our staff and volunteers, we served more than 60 seniors in and around Dharamshala up to the end of May. We still continue to receive calls for help from a few senior individuals every month. This program was carried out with support from Tibetan Settlement Office.



Distribution of Food and Basic Necessities

As the nation went into lockdown, many people were left without a job, especially the daily wage earners, taking away their only source of income. Lha, with help and donations from many sponsors, distributed groceries and tsampa (a Tibetan staple food) to many needy Tibetans as well as to local Indians.

In May, we distributed, free of charge, 1,250 kilograms of rice, 1,250 kilograms of wheat flour, 250 liters of cooking oil, 100 kilograms of butter, 100 kilograms of sugar and 800 kilograms of tsampa to needy people in Dharamshala.

Lha has also provided free, door to door deliveries of tsampa and other essential groceries to Tibetan hermits living in the mountains around Dharamshala. This program was made possible with donations from a few individuals, and from the Norzang Foundation and the KNT Foundation. We extend our deepest gratitude to all for their support.



Monthly Town Sanitization

Working with the Tibetan Settlement Office (TSO) Dharamshala, Lha has volunteered to sanitize the whole area of Mcleod Ganj once every month. Since May this year Lha staff have sanitized every nook and corner of Mcleod Ganj and Forsyth Ganj each month, under the TSO initiative to control the rising number of COVID-19 positive cases in Dharamshala.

Lha has supported the TSO to the best of its capability in carrying out many programs during the pandemic and is always ready to work hand in hand with TSO when it comes to serving the community in need.



Low Cost Lunch Box Service

Lha started a low cost lunch box service from May 2020 when India was entering the second phase of the pandemic lockdown. One lunch box meal is provided for under 1 USD (INR 70), with free delivery. The service was available to the general public living in and around Mcleod Ganj and aimed to provide healthy, affordable meals and make people's life a little more convenient during this difficult time.

The lunch box service is free for those who cannot afford to pay. This initiative also provided an occupation for Lha staff who were not working on the usual Lha programs due to the lockdown.



Financial Support to Individuals in Need

The global pandemic has affected everyone's life and for many it was the worst time of their life. During and after the peak time of lockdown, numerous individuals reached out to us for help. Despite our own major financial crunch due to COVID-19, we were able to support seven individuals, enabling them to pay their rent for few months and buy basic necessities. Acknowledging the sensitivity of the situation for these individuals, we are not mentioning their names or including their photos anywhere in our reports.



Projects



Intensive English Language Course for Geshes and Khenpos

Lha offered a free Intensive English language course for monks and nuns who have a Ph.D. in Buddhist Philosophy (Geshes and Khenpos). The four month course was set up to develop, enrich and expand the knowledge and communication skills required for teaching Buddhist philosophy in the English language. Twelve monks took part; the initial two months in the classroom with the second two months online under the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. In addition to improving the participants' level of English, the course was designed to make them familiar with specific terms and terminologies required for teaching Buddhism.

The classes were held daily from 9am to 5pm. Three certified and experienced teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) from England were hired to teach the course and other native English speaking volunteers were paired with students to enable them to practice their speaking skills and clarify any doubts about what they had learned in the classroom. The participants took a keen interest, wanting to better their knowledge of English and said they greatly appreciated the facilities provided by Lha, including a free lunch when the lessons were held in the classroom.



Clean Water Project

Before we wrapped up this challenging year, we were able to set up another water filtration system on 29th December. As per the request application from Lily Tibetan Village Welfare Society, we installed our 29th water filter machine to benefit more than 200 residents of Lily Tibetan Village in Bir. Lha is continuously expanding the Clean Water Project which provides safe and clean drinking water facilities in local and remote areas, including schools, monasteries, nunneries and colonies.

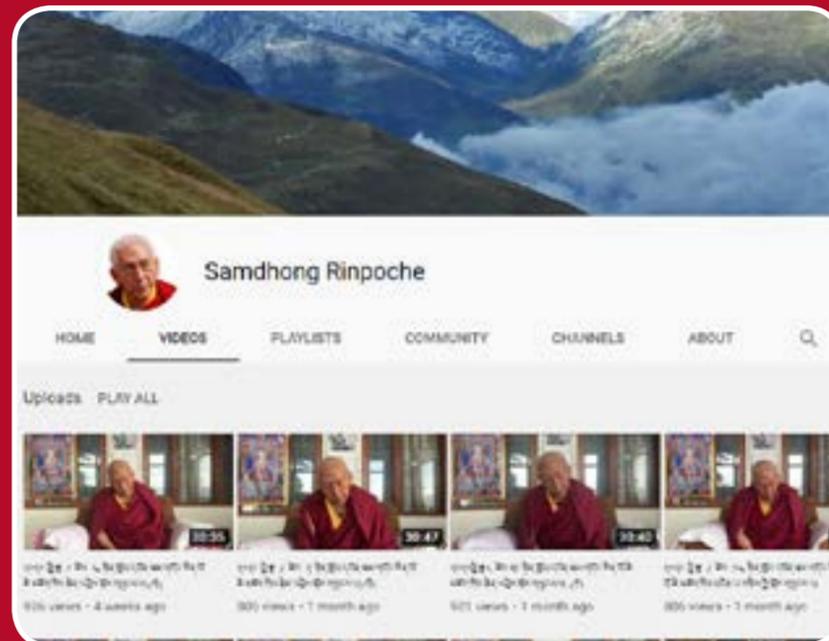
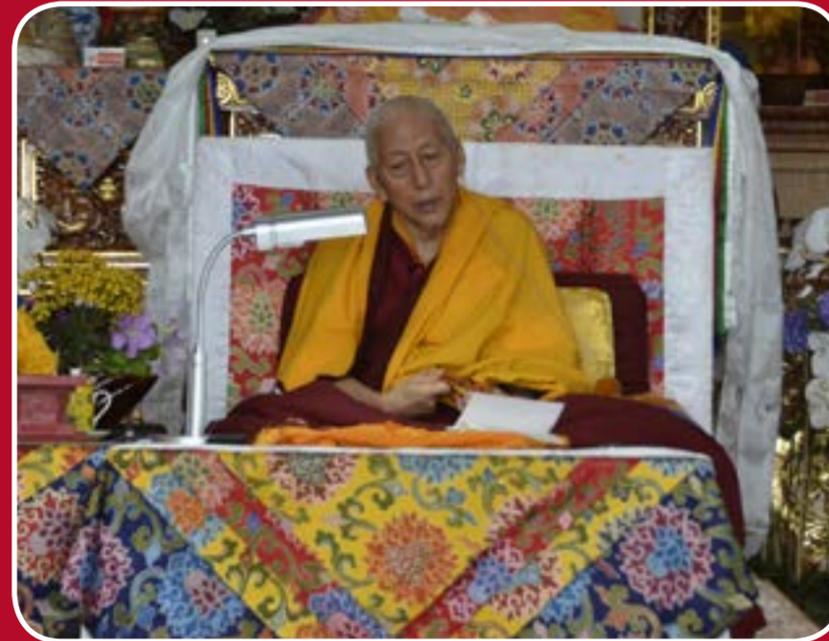
All the existing water filter machines have been cleaned and serviced annually by professionals. This service is provided right before the onset of the monsoon which witnesses an increasing number of people with water borne diseases. With the Clean Drinking Water Project, Lha hopes not only to make drinking water freely and easily available to everyone, regardless of social background, but also to improve the overall health of people in the community and reduce the incidence of water borne diseases.



Preservation and Promotion of Tibetan Language & Culture

Under Lha's umbrella project of Preservation and Promotion of Tibetan Culture and Tradition, one of our main projects is to collect and archive the valuable teachings, writings and speeches of the Eminence Professor Samdong Rinpoche. Since the beginning of the project in 2014, we have uploaded 329 videos on Rinpoche's speeches and writings on Buddhism, non-violence, education, political science, democracy, law, history, auxiliary sciences, language, environment, promotion of virtue, promotion of peace, values of life etc. All the resources are available in media formats whereby we can read, listen to, and watch them in English, Tibetan, and Hindi.

The YouTube channel has more than 6000 subscribers with a total view of 980,996 till date. This year alone, we were able to upload 55 videos on the channel. Rinpoche's Sound Cloud audio content currently has over 4,300 regular listeners, with a total of 218,520 listeners. More than 800 articles (both in Tibetan and English) were published on the website; www.samdhongrinpoche.com



Contact Magazine

Contact magazine is a monthly printed publication covering Tibetan issues, news and community information. In 2020, due to the global pandemic, we were able to print only the January issue. As usual, we printed 1,000 copies which were distributed locally and posted to various schools, offices and libraries within India and abroad. In the January issue we published 16 feature news articles by eight volunteer writers, one 'people' story and two pages of Tibetan and international headlines.

Since lockdown, we have published news updates and daily headlines on the *Contact* website and facebook page. *Contact's* priority is to report the human right issues inside Tibet under China's repression; we also cover Tibet related news on international platforms and of the Tibetan community in exile, and the activities of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In total, we have published 76 feature articles this year and have worked with 17 volunteer writers from across the world.



Special Issue of Contact: Children's Writing and Drawing

Tibetan schools were closed for the whole academic year under the pandemic lockdown restrictions. *Contact* created a platform for children to engage in a creative project and to get their work published. The project was divided into three sections, inviting writings in Tibetan and English, and a third, drawing section. 39 English written entries were submitted, and 26 in Tibetan together with 35 drawings, all from Tibetan students across India and Nepal, divided into different age groups. The submissions were put to an independent panel of experts who selected the entries for publication.

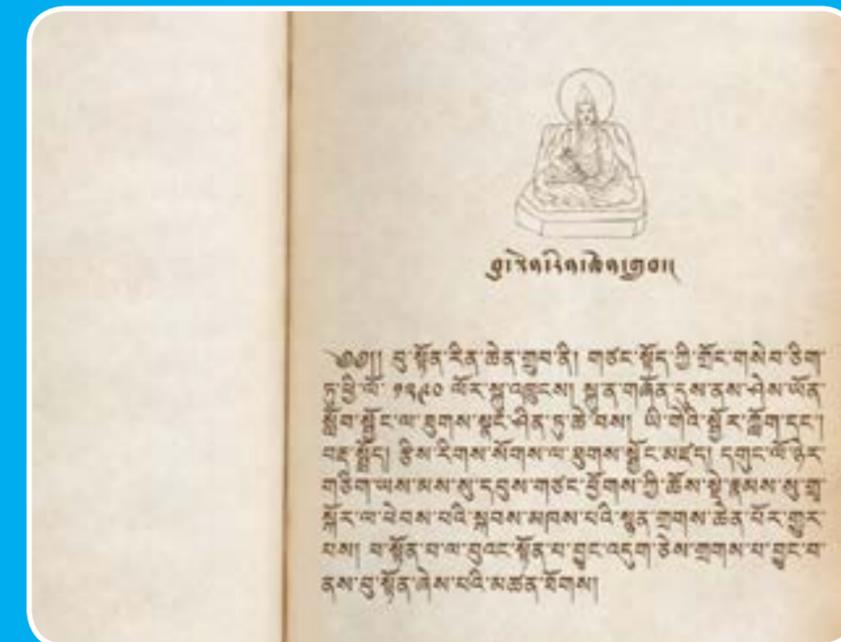
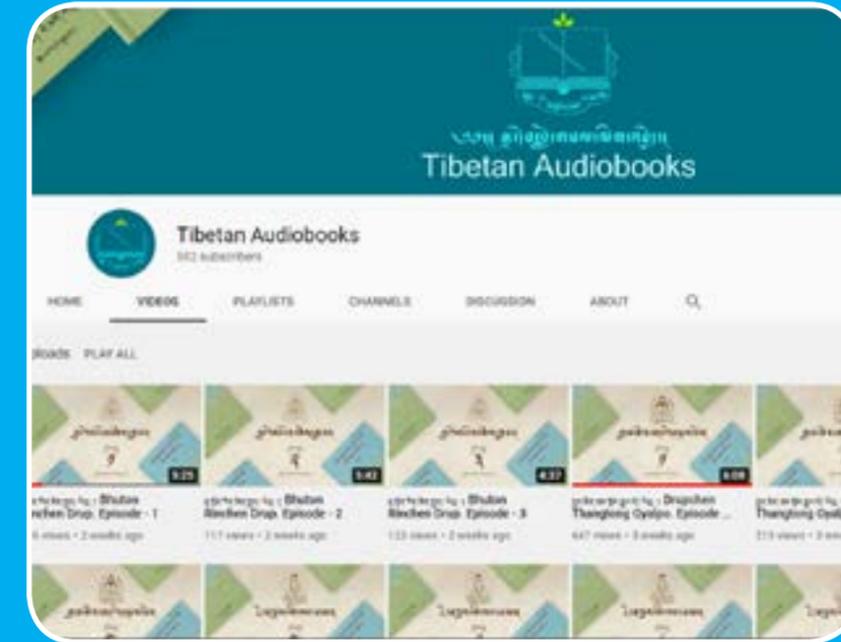
We have printed 500 copies of the Children's Writing and Drawing special issue of *Contact* magazine, which are available free of charge. Copies of the booklet were posted to all selected participants, as well as to schools, and distributed locally in Dharamshala. The printing and postage of *Contact* magazine has been funded by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy since 2012.



Production of Tibetan Audiobooks

Production of Tibetan Audiobooks is another venture for our organization and is led by the Venerable Redo Sangay. With rapidly increasing usage of the internet and technologies, we aim to contribute to making Tibetan content available online for those who prefer to access materials online, including people wanting to learn the language. Through this project, we aim to make series of video/audiobooks featuring 34 significant Tibetans who have made immense contributions in the fields of Tibetan Buddhism, politics, language and culture in our history.

We are also working out how best to share this content with Tibetans living inside Tibet. Though it is difficult to measure the exact impact and result of this project, our intended beneficiaries are Tibetans living in Tibet, India, Nepal and Bhutan and we believe the project will benefit anyone across the world who knows, or is interested in learning, the Tibetan language.



International Language and Computer Courses

Since Lha's inception in 1997, Lha's key focus has been on education in exile, with special attention to young adults, school dropouts and those who did not receive a formal education when young. Lha focuses on teaching international languages and computer courses to equip newly arrived Tibetan refugees with the necessary communication and basic computer skills indispensable to finding jobs and supporting their livelihood. More than 13,000 students have taken Lha's language classes since 2003 and 80 new students registered from January to March 2020.

17 of this year's students took computer courses which are available in two levels: Beginner and Intermediate. The Beginner level covers basic computer skills, including introduction to computers, typing, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel and Power Point while the Intermediate course covers Adobe Photoshop and Adobe InDesign. These classes are attended by monks, nuns, lay people and school students of varying age groups.



Scholarship Program

This has been the third year of Lha's Tibetan Women's Nursing Scholarship program. The program, which started in 2018, offers three-year scholarships for three women students each year.

All three of this year's students have shown focus, enthusiasm and determination and have achieved good performance in academics, even during the COVID-19 restrictions.

Unfortunately we are unable to offer the scholarship to new applicants this year; however we plan to support more students next year.



Volunteers' Voice

Volunteers have been Lha's backbone since the inception of the organization. Thousands of volunteers from different parts of the world have given us their time and efforts in many of our projects. Due to the global pandemic, this year we had only 18 volunteers, who helped us in teaching languages, writing articles for *Contact* magazine and services during the nationwide lockdown. We are extremely grateful to each and every one of our volunteers; They are the real superheroes of our mission.

"Volunteering at Lha is a fun way to get to know some of the local people in McLeod Ganj and to learn about Tibetan culture. It's a great place to base yourself in the town and provides a hub for various activities. There are lots of different opportunities. I've taught English to various groups here and written for a magazine produced by the charity. There's always lots going on and the staff, volunteers and students all help to create a welcoming atmosphere".

- Ben Byrne from England

Volunteers' Voice

"I am a yoga teacher and one of the major branches of yoga is karma yoga - serving others without expectation and that's what Lha Charitable Trust is doing selflessly for many people, including me. I got the opportunity to practice karma yoga with Lha during COVID-19 pandemic, serving senior citizens. Thank you so much all the Lha staff, supporters and founders to keep such a beautiful light alive in our community."

- Sonam Paldon

"Working with Lha over the last eight years has opened so many doors for me, I have made friends both within the Tibetan community and among worldwide volunteers as well as increasing my knowledge of humanitarian issues in Tibet and the wider world. I am impressed by Lha's ability to recognise and respond to needs in the community and to adapt the way they work according to what is needed, who is available to help and what funding is available, including during this pandemic. I have seen them gain the respect of funders which has enabled them to deliver many valuable services. And, above all, it's fun!"

- Jenny James from England

Our Donors & Partners



Lha's Achievements from 2003 to 2020

13,387	language course students
3,194	computer courses and IT workshop students
8,603	volunteers from over 42 different countries
1,927	international education institutes participated in the cultural exchange program
34,340	free books distributed
52,434	articles of clothing collected and distributed
17,710	people have access to clean drinking water with 28 water filtration systems installed
1,246	people benefited through Clear Vision Project
1,260	people benefited through Smile Dental Project
112,630	copies of Contact magazine distributed
355	people graduated from Lha's life skill training courses
607	benefited through Lha Community Soup Kitchen

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His Eminence Prof.Samdhong Rinpoche

TIBET NATURE

Website:

www.lhasocialwork.org

www.samdhongrinpoche.com

www.tibetnature.net

www.contactmagazine.net

www.tibetfairtrade.com

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