



Jamyang Foundation



Dear Friends of Jamyang Foundation,

Hope your year is off to a happy start!

This summer, Karma Lekshe Tsomo and Elles Lohuis set off on another Himalayan adventure to visit the Jamyang Foundation projects in Kinnaur, Spiti, and Zangskar. Wonderful to see how well the primary schools for young girls at the monasteries in Karsha and Zangla are doing. At the moment, each of the schools has 18 students from neighboring areas. The young girls come to the monastery schools to study six days a week. The monasteries provide a safe space for quality education in line with Buddhist culture. An encouraging environment where these young girls can flourish is crucial to nurturing a future generation of strong Buddhist women. After finishing their education at the monastery schools, the girls have the opportunity to further their studies at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Leh, Ladakh. Many girls have already taken up this challenge and are studying in Leh with the support of Jamyang Foundation. This summer, we met students from our monasteries in Sani and Zangla in Leh. All are doing very well in their studies and are hoping to return to Zangskar after graduation. The young women said they plan to teach at local schools or, as 12-year-old Dolkar from Zangla said, with conviction, "I want to help my village as a doctor."



The first cup of tea from the solar cooker at Zangla



Young students at Karsha Monastery school

This year again, Jamyang Foundation contributed the necessary material support: food, educational materials, teachers' salaries, personal hygiene items like soap and towels, and warm underclothes to get through the freezing winter. The nuns' wishes were fulfilled when we donated three solar cookers to the monasteries at Skyagam, Zangla, and Sani. With more than 300 days of intense sunshine in the area, the solar cookers proved to be highly successful. Locally made in Leh, these cookers cost 6,000 rupees (US\$127) each. This may seem like quite an investment, but the solar cookers save an enormous amount of time and fuel for the nuns. Under the guidance of Chick, our conscientious volunteer from Hawai'i, the nuns in Zangla were the first ones to put together a solar cooker. A cup of boiled water was served within 10 minutes after putting the kettle in the cooker. It wasn't long before we enjoyed a cup of traditional butter tea together!

The solar cookers are an economical means for the nuns to prepare the standard meal of rice and *dahl*, which normally takes hours to simmer on traditional wood stoves at these high altitudes. Since there are precious few trees in the area, all the firewood needs to be brought in from Kashmir or Manali. The solar cookers are an ideal way of having access to boiled water at all times – a must for the nuns' health, considering the poor quality of drinking water in these areas. We are hoping to provide eight more solar cookers for our other projects in Zangskar, Spiti, and Kinnaur next summer. The Jamyang Foundation projects are getting more and more eco-friendly and self-sufficient. We are delighted to report that this year most of our projects were able to grow vegetables in newly constructed greenhouses. Even with a severe shortage of water due to global warming, the nuns at the monastery in Zangla have set up three greenhouses and produce vegetables to dry for the long and barren winter. The nuns have all become very capable in maintaining the greenhouses

and collecting seeds in autumn to sow the next spring. Being able to grow fresh vegetables, together with training in health and hygiene, has improved the health of the nuns immensely over the last few years.



The nuns at Sani with home grown vegetables



English class at Changchub Chöling Monastery in Zangla

It has been a very good year for the students at Jampa Chöling, our project in Kinnaur. The students had the honor to receive their first female Dharma teacher. Gen Tenzin Namdol joined the monastery to teach Buddhist philosophy and Tibetan language. Having studied at Jangchup Chöling Monastery in Mundgod for 20 years, Gen Tenzin Namdol is fully qualified to teach and an excellent role model for all young nuns. Due to landslides blocking the roads, the students from Kinnaur were not able to reach the yearly debating sessions for nuns held in Nepal this year. They were able to attend H.H. Dalai Lama's teachings at the temple in Dharamsala in September, however. Gen Tenzin Namdol arranged for the younger nuns from Jampa Chöling to receive the precepts of a novice nun (*getsulma*) precepts from H.H. Dalai Lama during the teachings. The student nuns at Jampa Chöling in Kinnaur would like to express their gratitude to all of you who have made this possible. "We are most honored to have such wonderful support. We feel very blessed that we are able to study with such great teachers. Thank you so much!"



The students of Jampa Chöling with their teachers



Young students at Zangla washing up for lunch

Reflections from Changchub Chöling, Zangla **Chick Alsop**

My volunteer teaching at the Changchub Chöling monastery turned out to be one of the most rewarding and interesting experiences of my life. For the final leg of my journey, I boarded a crowded bus in Padum and sat next to an elderly woman cradling the head of a baby yak in her lap. As I climbed the steep road from the bus stop, several nuns rushed to help with my bags, their warm smiles and laughter quickly alleviating the concern I had about my unannounced arrival. I was served a sumptuous dinner of fresh vegetables, curried rice, and tea, and slept well in the comfortable room that was to be my home for the next five weeks.

At sunrise the next morning, I gazed out across the magnificent Zangskar Valley into a peaceful, unhurried world of green fields and snow-capped mountains. The nuns named me Achok (big brother). With their help, I quickly became

immersed in the gentle rhythms of the monastery. Each morning I was serenaded by the soft chanting of the puja ceremony as I prepared for class. The nuns attended school faithfully and with an eagerness that often extended classes overtime. On a field trip, we visited the monastery's 500-year-old prayer hall where the nuns taught me about the duties of a shrine keeper and the intricacies of the splendid statuary and murals that adorn the walls. We also worked as a team installing solar lighting, assembling a solar cooker, building a new walkway, and cutting and hauling grass. Pashi, the milk cow, and I enjoyed the scenery and became good friends on our daily climbs to the high pasture.

Although my classes were well received, I know that the lessons the nuns taught me were equally or even more important. They live harmoniously in a true sisterhood, selflessly dedicating their time and efforts to the welfare of others. They lead simple, unrushed, and materially uncluttered lives of chores, hard work, study, and spiritual routine. Without a doubt, they are the happiest people I have ever known. I have enjoyed many adventures in the Buddhist Himalayas, but volunteering at Changchub Chöling was the most memorable of all....

Children of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh ***Mong Sano Marma and Karma Lekshe Tsomo***

The winter months are best for visiting the Jamyang Foundation projects in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. Since 2001, Jamyang Foundation has founded three schools for Marma tribal girls in remote areas of the Hill Tracts. Sanghamitta School, founded in Bandarban District in 2001 with 35 young girls, was the first project. Currently, this school provides primary school education for 136 girls of the Marma and other communities who study Bangla, English, math, and their own languages and culture. Sanghamitta School already has students attending high school.

Mahamaya School began in a small village in Rangamati in 2003 with 17 students and expanded to 35 students in 2005. A new class has been added each year and now there are 85 students. Visakha School, established in 2006 by villagers in Manikchari, Khagrachari District, with the help of Jamyang Foundation, began with 38 students in two classes. In 2007, the number of students increased to 60. In 2008, a new class of 10 girls was admitted, bringing the total to 70. The children have blossomed with these new educational opportunities.



Students and teachers of the Visakha School in Bangladesh

The schools were established in Buddhist tribal areas which are experiencing extreme economic hardship and are under threat of cultural extinction. The schools have greatly improved girls' perceptions of what they can achieve educationally, socially, and spiritually. The Jamyang Foundation schools are providing unprecedented opportunities to girls who would otherwise be deprived of an education in areas where girls and young women are highly vulnerable to sex trafficking. The schools have become very popular among the local people, because the teachers hold regular classes and show loving kindness for their students. The local villagers are now helping support the school. Everyone agrees that educating girls is the best way of protecting them against sex trafficking and other dangers.

This year, the security situation was better than last time and armed guards only accompanied me for a couple of days. The children at all three schools are now clean, healthy, and happy. On the way to the schools, I met the mothers of Hlasiu and Azaima, two of our scholarship students in Thailand. In Chittagong, I met our four scholarship students who are doing

degrees in Buddhist Studies at Chittagong University. Next year, we will be able to provide four more scholarships to deserving young women studying at Chittagong University. A former member of Parliament, Ms. Ma Mya Ching, has offered a piece of land for an institute for Buddhist women in Bandarban. We would like to create an institute that would be both a training center for nuns and a school for girls, especially poor orphan girls. Jamyang Foundation is ready to help with teachers' salaries and books. All we need are funds for construction!

Sanghamitra Institute. Bodhgaya, India
Karma Lekshe Tsomo

In 1996, Bhante U Nyeida offered Karma Lekshe Tsomo a beautiful piece of land across from the Burmese Vihar in Bodhgaya. The vision is to create Sanghamitra Institute as an international gathering place for women's intellectual, social, and spiritual enrichment. The Institute will provide a wide variety of programs in languages, Dharma, meditation, and practical skills to help women develop their full potential as leaders, teachers, counselors, community leaders, and spiritual guides to others. The setting, which includes a view of the *bodhi* tree where the Buddha became enlightened, is inspiring.

At Sanghamitra Institute, women from countries around the world will be able to access programs in Buddhist culture, philosophy, and meditation. The Institute will offer workshops and seminars in conflict management, healthcare, environmental awareness, substance abuse, and a variety of life skills. Programs will not only benefit Buddhist women, but also Hindu and Muslim women and children from economically disadvantaged villages nearby. These institute's programs will include literacy, vocational training, nutrition, health and hygiene, and the arts. We envision Sanghamitra Institute as a place for conferences, seminars, retreats, and other cultural activities and a variety of community development programs. The creative potential for women's empowerment is boundless.



Women of Bodhgaya celebrate a traditional puja to the sun in front of the Sanghamitra land

To realize these dreams, the most immediate need is to build a hostel where 40 students from developing countries can study during the winter months. The next step is to build a meditation hall and classrooms. The third step is to build cottages for women visiting Bodhgaya from countries around the world. The buildings will be surrounded by fruit trees, *bodhi* trees, and flowers. Sanghamitra Institute's programs will help women gain the knowledge and practical skills they need to become self-sufficient, a necessity for developing their human potential. Women will carry their knowledge back to their communities, helping to alleviate poverty, suffering, and injustice in some of the poorest places in the world.

"Always be happy. May you live long. Thank you so much for everything. It is because of your kindness that we can study and work for peace.... Thank you. We will pray for you!" (From the nuns of Jampa Chöling, Kinnaur, India)

We would like to keep you informed about Jamyang Foundation's activities in an environmental-friendly way.

Please help us by sending us your email address to: jamyangfoundation@ymail.com. Thank you!

The Jamyang Foundation website is being renovated. Stay tuned! www.jamyang.org