

# Tibetan Community Resilience Programme

Activity Report

(April 2023 – March 2024)

FOUNDATION FOR  
**Non-violent  
Alternatives**  
To inform and shape policy on Tibet and the region

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## 1. Education and Language

- a) The Tibetan Community Resilience Program (TCRP) continued to support children's reading programs in Sonamling Tibetan Settlement in Ladakh, north India. A dedicated reading space cum library remained open six days a week, with an average of 30 children visiting daily for interactive sessions. The collection of books has grown to 3,500 children's books and librarians hosted regular activities such as reading, storytelling, drawing, book bingo, treasure hunts, and book talks. Authors of children's books were invited to interact with the children. In June, Jamyang Gyaltzen, an early childhood education specialist, conducted storytelling sessions on his books *Mobile Monster*, *I Love Momo*, and *White Yak*. In September, Meera Ganapathi, author of *The Girl Who Couldn't Stop Laughing*, conducted a read-aloud session.



Ladakh Sonamling settlement children with visiting authors at the library

- b) TCRP supported reading intervention programmes in three remote nomadic camps of Nyoma, Sumdo, and Hanley. The programme introduced children to diverse books and interactive sessions aimed at fostering a vibrant reading culture. In October, three library educators engaged students in read-aloud sessions, storytelling, pop-up libraries, library card making, book bingo, book talks, character



Nomadic children engaged in reading activities on the vast Jangthang grasslands in north India

alive activities, guided drawing, and more. A total of 240 children participated in the sessions, each receiving a reading kit with Tibetan storybooks and stationery.



c) To reach children lacking access to libraries and books, TCRP launched a mobile library for children in Agling, Ladakh, in 2022. An old van was refurbished with bookshelves and books, and visits Agling every weekend. To date, 100 children in Agling have benefited from the mobile library and participated in reading activities.



*Children reading and browsing books in the mobile library*



## 2. Health Care

a) TCRP continued supporting vulnerable patients diagnosed with Hepatitis B. In April and May, follow-up tests and free medication were provided to patients at TCV Suja school diagnosed during the previous year's screening. Additionally, Hepatitis B vaccinations were administered to 90 students at TCV Suja school in July. The initiative currently offers free treatment and regular testing to 60 patients from various locations, including Delhi, Dharamshala, Varanasi, Ladakh, Gyuto Monastery, and TCV Suja.



b) TCRP engaged Tibetan healthcare professionals to conduct cancer awareness and H-Pylori testing in various Tibetan settlements. H-Pylori is a bacteria found in the digestive system and a leading cause of stomach ulcers



*Community members receiving consultation*

and cancer. In May, tests were conducted at four Tibetan settlements in Himachal Pradesh: Palrabling, Kullu-Manali, Pandoh, and Rewalsar. A total of 410 people were screened, with 62 testing positive. Those who tested positive received subsidised medications, and seven economically vulnerable patients received the 14-day medication for free.



In November, similar screenings and health camps were conducted at six Tibetan

settlements and scattered communities in northeast India: Sikkim, Kalimpong, Darjeeling, Sonada, Salugura, and the Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies, Varanasi. A total of 803 people were tested, with 179 testing positive. They received subsidized medications, and 89 economically vulnerable patients received the 14-day medication for free. Additionally, doctors and nurses delivered health talks on cancer prevention and healthy living practices. The program also assisted 26 cancer patients in securing hospital appointments, facilitating communication with specialists, and providing assistance during hospital visits in Delhi.



- c) In February, TCRP organised a health fair in Doeguling Tibetan Settlement in Mundgod, south India to promote healthy lifestyles within the community. The fair included an open marathon race, basketball matches, a traditional *gorshey* (Tibetan circle dance), free health check-ups, and wellness talks. Approximately 1,000 community members participated in the health fair.

- d) In March-April, young Tibetan dentists offered free dental care to elderly Tibetan refugees at the Jampaling Elders Home in Dharamshala, serving 100 residents. Following an initial oral health examination by a Dharamshala-based dentist, 26 residents were



- e) approved for dentures. Procedures such as teeth extraction and restoration were performed before fitting dentures. In April, four more dentists and a prosthodontist joined to help with denture fitting. However, only 13 residents received dentures due to



individual health issues. The program provided five full dentures and eight partial ones. The camp concluded with an educational session on denture care.

- f) In collaboration with Tibetan healthcare providers, TCRP promoted cardiac health and awareness of cardiac diseases among Tibetan settlement residents. In June, free medical camps were conducted in four South Indian Tibetan settlements: Bylakuppe, Kollegal, Mundgod, and Hunsur. A total of 1,400 Tibetans benefited from consultations with specialists and screenings for various health conditions, including cardiology, oncology, gastroenterology, urology, orthopedics, ophthalmology, and gynecology. Out of the 830 individuals who underwent cardiac screenings, 18 were diagnosed with heart diseases. The program assisted patients by scheduling hospital appointments, facilitating communication with doctors, and helping with hospital visits. In total, the program supported 119 patients, including 22 with diagnosed cardiac conditions.



*Community members in a health camp at Kollegal Tibetan settlement*

### 3. Women Empowerment

The Tibetan Community Resilience Project (TCRP) continued its support for a multi-year initiative aimed at empowering vulnerable Tibetan women microentrepreneurs. The Tibetan Women Microentrepreneurship Project (TWMP), launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, focuses on providing assistance to low-income women, particularly single mothers. This initiative offers small grants and tailored mentorship to help these women grow and enhance their businesses.

This year, TWMP was expanded to the Sonamling Settlement in Ladakh, targeting traditional handloom weavers and tailors. A total of 23 women were selected and grouped based on their skills into three categories: Tsugden rug weaving, tailoring, and horthak weaving.

- In Leh, five women formed a collective to produce traditional woolen rugs. They partnered with a local cashmere enterprise to source raw materials, ensuring sustainable production practices.
- Another group of five tailors in Leh began creating curtains and cushion covers inspired by Tibetan textile patterns and designs.
- In Jangthang, TWMP supported 13 Tibetan



*Programme beneficiary, Ladakh*

nomadic women specializing in horthak weaving, enabling them to produce and market traditional accessories and lifestyle products.

To date, TWMP has supported over 50 women across Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Ladakh in diverse entrepreneurial ventures. These businesses span various sectors, including:

- **Food production:** Tsampa (roasted barley flour), chili paste, snacks, and frozen foods.



- **Crafts:** Prayer flags, woven products, thangka paintings, and custom-made *chubas* (Tibetan traditional dresses).
- **Services:** Restaurants, salons, and direct sales enterprises.

The TWMP places a strong emphasis on branding, marketing, and distribution. Products developed under the program have been showcased at high-profile events like the Dharamshala International Film Festival and the India Art Fair in Delhi. To enhance visibility, the project has also developed professional marketing materials, including logos, labels, and catalogs for individual products.

As part of its market linkage initiatives, the TWMP facilitated the placement of rugs, *kerags* (traditional belts), and other items in select stores in Dharamshala, particularly during the winter season.

To date, the Tibetan Women Microentrepreneurship Project (TWMP) has empowered over 50 women across Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Ladakh by supporting their diverse entrepreneurial ventures. The program has assisted women in conducting market research, developing business plans, and providing targeted marketing support. The businesses span a variety of sectors, including:

- **Food production:** Tsampa (roasted barley flour), chili paste, snacks, and frozen foods.
- **Crafts:** Prayer flags, woven products, thangka paintings, and custom-made *chubas* (traditional Tibetan dresses).
- **Services:** Restaurants, salons, and direct sales enterprises.

The TWMP prioritizes branding, marketing, and distribution to enhance the visibility of its beneficiaries' products. Program-supported goods have been showcased at prestigious events, such as the Dharamshala International Film Festival and the India Art Fair in Delhi. Customized collaterals—including logos, labels, and catalogs—have been created to support each product's promotion.

As part of its market linkage efforts, the TWMP team has facilitated the placement of products such as rugs and *kerags* (traditional belts) in select stores in Dharamshala, particularly during the winter season.

TCRP continued educating school children on sexual and reproductive health. In October, gender experts conducted workshops on puberty, adolescent health, menstrual health management, gender sensitization, and sex education in Sambhota Tibetan Schools in Miao and Tenzingang Settlements, benefiting 124 students in grades 6-8. Students were introduced to entry-level discussions on the reproductive system, menstrual health, consent, violence, and changing adolescent relationships. The interactive sessions provided a safe space for students



to have open

*Parents participating in workshop and a student expressing her view through the medium of art*

conversations on sexual and reproductive health topics, which can help encourage similar conversations with peers, family members, and others without fear or embarrassment. A similar workshop on child sexual abuse was conducted for 68 parents, aiming to educate parents on their roles in such cases.

- a) The programme recognises the challenges faced by financially disadvantaged Tibetan girls in accessing higher education opportunities. As a result, the Tibetan Girls Scholarship Programme was created to provide financial support to underprivileged girls enabling them to pursue their academic aspirations. The scholarships aim to empower a new generation of talented Tibetan



girls become future leaders, educators, entrepreneurs, and change agents. This year, the program awarded scholarships to 24 girls, covering tuition fees and monthly allowances. These recipients are studying various disciplines, including medicine, nursing, business administration, English literature, and Tibetan studies across colleges in India. Ten girls graduated successfully this year.

- b) TCRP organised a Menstrual Wellness Retreat in Bangalore for ten young Tibetan women, mostly university students. The two-day retreat provided medically accurate information and practical tools for managing menstrual health holistically. Topics

covered included lifestyle, mental health, nutrition, and yoga, facilitated by experts. Following the retreat, participants reported feeling empowered to make informed decisions about their bodies, improving overall well-being.



#### 4. Livelihoods and Community Development

To address youth unemployment and underemployment within the Tibetan community, the Tibetan Community Resilience Project (TCRP) continued its support for livelihood



*An electrician trainee at a field site*



*Nail art trainee with course completion certificate*

skills training programmes targeted at young Tibetans. This year, 107 participants were selected to undergo vocational training programmes conducted by industry experts in Dharamshala and partner institutes in Delhi. Special priority was given to individuals without formal education, school dropouts, and former monks and nuns.

In Dharamshala, the training was conducted in four batches, each accommodating 6-8 trainees. Barista training proved to be the most sought-after course, prompting the introduction of an additional batch. In total, 33 trainees received barista training, while food and beverage specialists trained 22 participants in special cuisines and 24 in baking.

Beyond Dharamshala, partner institutes offered diverse vocational courses, including:



- **Nail Art** (6 trainees), conducted by Nail Rituals.
- **Electrician and Beautician Training** (6 trainees each), provided by CII-MCM Trust.
- **Yoga Teacher Training** (2 trainees), organised by Arogya Yoga School in Rishikesh.
- **Wood Carving and Carpentry** (1 trainee), offered by Lhashing.

Through these initiatives, the TCRP aims to equip young Tibetans with practical and market-relevant skills to improve their employability and foster better career opportunities.

- a) Livelihood training was complemented with sessions on personality development, financial literacy, and business development. The Tibetan Centre for Conflict Resolution (TCCR) conducted a two-day workshop on personality development while Tenzing Seldon, a Delhi-based strategist, entrepreneur, and motivational speaker, was invited to conduct a workshop on small-scale entrepreneurship, focusing on business development, growth, and management. Dr Bianca-Maria, a nutritionist from Switzerland, provided a session on nutrition, food hygiene practices, and healthy eating habits.



*Trainees in Dharamshala learning French baking*



*Trainees at a personality development workshop*

- b) The TCRP continued supporting rainwater harvesting and groundwater rejuvenation projects in Mundgod Tibetan settlement in Karnataka state. The Mundgod region is prone to drought and the settlement has been facing water scarcity, including depleting groundwater levels, frequent drought-like conditions, and lack of access to clean drinking water. As part of the programme's efforts, a borewell with a recharge pit facility was installed at the Tibetan Opera Association Hall to facilitate rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge. In addition, the program supported the

Camp 3 including of 12 paver seating was hired



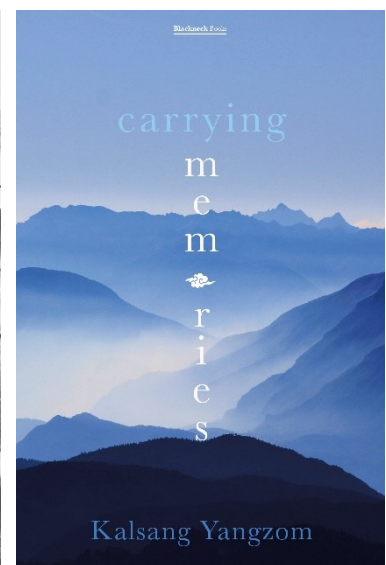
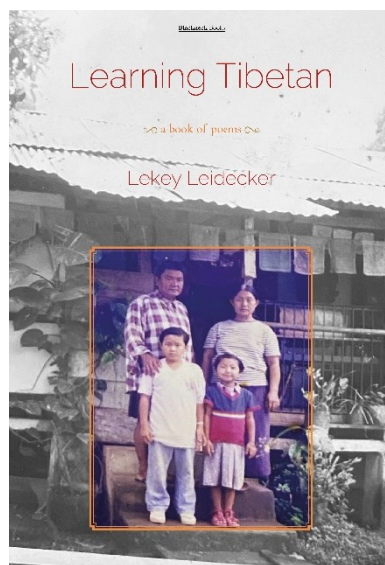
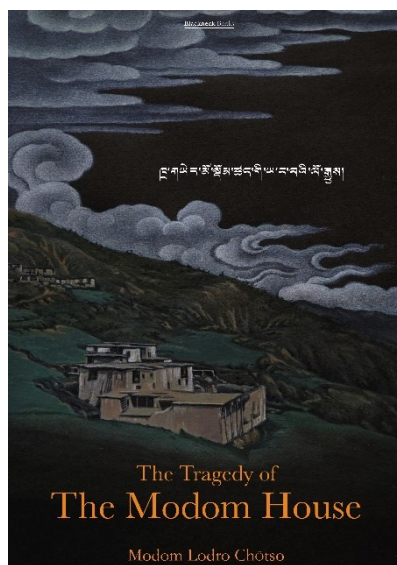
renovation of the marketplace, the installation solar lights, interlocking blocks, and benches. A staff to maintain the

*Inauguration of the borewell recharge pit at Opera Association hall*

previously neglected and locked public toilet, improving its functionality and hygiene. These interventions are expected to benefit settlement residents, particularly shopkeepers and visitors to the marketplace.

## 5. Arts and Culture

- a) The programme facilitated the publication of four new books by Tibetan writers and poets. "*The Tragedy of the Modom House*" narrates a poignant tale of a Tibetan family under China's oppression in eastern Tibet. "*Learning Tibetan*," a collection of poems by third-generation Tibetan Lekey Leidecker, explores themes of identity, location, and the Tibetan struggle. "*Murder of Tenzin*," an engaging murder mystery by Tenzin Nyima, and "*Carrying Memories*," a book of poems by Kalsang Yangzom, delve into themes of home, loss, longing, and identity within the Tibetan diaspora. These books were printed and distributed for free to Tibetan schools, institutes, community libraries,



*Books published with program support*

and NGOs. Book launches and interactions with writers were organized in Dharamshala. The program collaborates with Tibetan authors and poets to promote and publish their works, encouraging a new generation of Tibetan writers to share their stories and experiences.

- b) The programme partnered with established Tibetan filmmakers to launch a filmmaking mentorship initiative for two new and aspiring Tibetan filmmakers. One of the mentees is completing a screenwriting course at FTII, Pune, a prestigious film institute in India and the other mentee has produced numerous music videos and is currently working in



*Two mentees with Tibetan filmmakers during their orientation session*

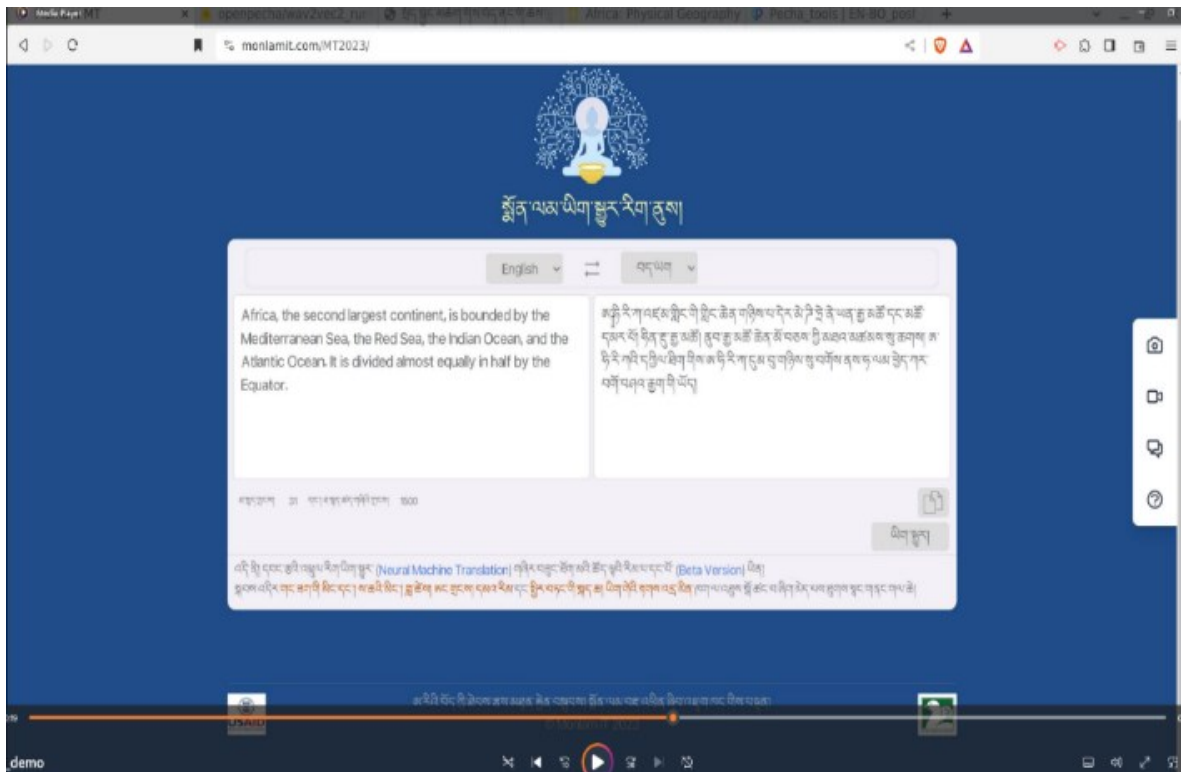
an Indian production house. Renowned Bhutanese filmmakers Dechen Roder and Tashi Gyaltzen provided 2.5 months of mentorship, covering script development, pre-production, production and direction, and editing and post-production. In addition, each mentee received a grant of INR 82,000 to work on their short-film projects. The two mentees completed work on their short films "*Chugthag*" and "*Whispers of Conscience*." Both films were selected for screening at a film festival in Koln, Germany.

- c) The programme supported the production of 71 episodes of Tibetan audiobooks featuring 10 historical figures including King Songtsen Gampo, Minister Gar Tongtsen, Drogon Choegyal Phagpa and many others. Texts of the abridged audiobooks are adapted from books authored by Tibetan scholar Ven. Redo Sangay. The audiobooks provide an accessible medium for young Tibetans to learn about their history and historical figures while the videos with text provide read along learning opportunities.



- d) The programme continued working with a group of Tibetan language experts and IT professionals on two related projects: an illustrated intermediate Tibetan dictionary for children below age six, and the first-ever Tibetan language spelling and grammar check application. A total of 3,000 culturally relevant Tibetan words were identified for the Tibetan intermediate dictionary, out of which 1,500 words were selected for translation and illustration. Work also continued on the development of the first-ever Tibetan language spelling and grammar check application. Language experts continued working on a glossary of Tibetan verbs and verb forms studying the tenses and uses of more than 950 verbs and 255 lexical and auxiliary verbs over the year.

The programme continued working with a team of Tibetan software developers, language experts, and part time annotators on developing a comprehensive Tibetan language artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning system, in the three primary areas of Machine Translation (MT), Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and Speech to Text (STT). AI experts from Google, Berkley and Hamburg Universities collaborated with Tibetan experts to plan programme implementation and build networks. The programme recruited and trained a team of 81 staff including project leads, programmers, team leads, and annotators from various Tibetan colleges and monasteries in Dharamshala, Bylakuppe, and Bangalore. Virtual and in-person training sessions were conducted focused on MT English and Tibetan book data cleaning, translation pair alignment, STT teaching transcription, children's speech recording and transcription, natural speech recording and transcription, OCR image selection and layouts, line segmentation, and image-to-text conversion.



Screengrab of Machine Translation (MT) web model

As part of the MT work, annotators created 1.5 million translation pairs of English-Tibetan sentences. These pairs were instrumental in training the MT model which was then used to translate untranslated titles and books. A team of programmers and annotators under OCR converted 2,50,000 images into machine-readable text formats enhancing text recognition. Under STT, a diverse and comprehensive dataset was developed as essential training data for STT and TTS models. The dataset includes 678 hours of recorded and transcribed Buddhist teachings, children's speech, natural speech, audiobooks, and movies. As a result of quality training datasets for all four models, the team completed the beta version of MT, OCR, STT and TTS models. Initial tests of these models have proved effective in translating Tibetan and English texts, with high accuracy in translating Buddhist texts, recognizing text in images, and converting printed documents into machine-readable text, as well as converting speech to text and text to speech.



*College students in Bangalore recording "Natural Speech" for STT model*

## **6. Legal Counselling**

- a) The programme worked with Tibetan lawyers to provide legal aid services for legally and economically vulnerable Tibetans. Services included drafting legal documents like affidavits, offering legal advice and opinions, representing clients before police authorities, judicial magistrates, and juvenile justice boards, and assisting with refugee documentation and registration issues. The programme assisted 192 individuals, families, organisations on various legal issues such as criminal and civil cases, marriage registrations, legal document drafting, affidavit preparation for various legal work, legal notices, agreements, FIR lodgings and applying for documents.
  
- b) Programme supported legal aid cell offered free legal assistance services every Friday, providing a secure environment for individuals who have experienced abuse or had their rights violated. Legal experts aided individuals recognise violence or abuse they have endured and raised awareness about their legal rights. Additionally, the programme provided counseling and professional therapies for victim rehabilitation and extended services to civil societies organisations, voluntary groups, and individuals advocating for child and women's rights.