



HIMALAYA HILFE e.V.

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Berlin, January 2024

Dear Sponsors and Friends,

We hope you all had a thoroughly enjoyable 2023 and have had a good start to the new year 2024.

In our last annual letter, we gave you a brief review of past activities of the last 30 years to mark the 30th anniversary of Himalaya Hilfe. This time, we want to tell you a little more about how we work. We have been asked about this from time to time over the past year.

First of all, a few requests from us to you.

In spring, the Bank für Sozialwirtschaft (now: Sozialbank) changed its IBAN to **DE89 3702 0500 0003 3945 00** and most of you have also changed your bank transfers / standing orders to Himalaya Hilfe accordingly following our info mail. If you have not yet done so, please change your standing orders now so that your sponsorship money and donations are not returned.

One more request: If it is possible for you, can you combine transfers for several sponsorships into one transfer? That would be great, because the Sozialbank has been charging fees for every incoming transfer for some time now and that would save a lot of costs. If you are from a country from which SEPA transfers are possible, we would be delighted if you use this option instead of PayPal. As an example - for a transfer of 500 euros from Switzerland, PayPal deducted 21,35 euros in fees.

It is also helpful for us if you indicate the purpose of the donation. We know this for ongoing sponsorships and regular donations. For other donations, please let us know whether it is a special purpose donation (then we will use it for the project most in need), a special purpose donation for a specific project (e.g. one of the monasteries, one of the schools, emergency aid in general / children / old people) or a general donation for the organisation. We can then allocate your donation correctly and pass it on according to your wishes. As you know, we cover the costs incurred with the general donations and can therefore still pass on 100% of the sponsorship money and the special purpose donations to your sponsored children or the projects.

Please inform us of any changes of address or name in good time so that you receive the letters from your sponsored children. The best way to do this is to send us an e-mail. You can also leave a message on the landline telephone at any time. We can receive the messages also when we are in Asia and we will be happy to get back to you. An SMS or a message/phone call via Signal Messenger is now also possible.

The number for this: +49 1525 3574708.



Now let's move on to answering the questions you have asked us over the course of the year.

As most of you know, we (Ulli and Sabine) are in India and Nepal twice a year, travelling to all the projects. This happens in autumn and spring, usually in October and March. On these trips we meet the sponsored children and adults and pay them the sponsorship money from you. This is always done retrospectively for six months. In autumn we pay out the money accumulated from January to June of the current year, in spring the money accumulated from July to December of the previous year. In the case of new sponsorships, from the month in which the sponsorship was taken on.

The money is transferred in advance to the accounts of the respective organisations in India and Nepal that are responsible for the different regions. There are many regulations for money transfers from abroad for charitable purposes, and funds may only be received and paid out with special authorisation. Our local managers have to deal with a huge amount of paperwork and evidence for the authorities. Payments are made at the exchange rate given by the banks on the day of receipt. When we are on site, the children, parents and old people come to us with their letters to you and for the children we want to see a proof that they are getting an education. If everything is in order, they get the sponsorship money. If the documents are not in order, they can be submitted at the next visit and then we will pay out the money for both visits. If someone fails to turn up twice without justification or has no proof twice, the sponsorship will be cancelled. We will then let you know. Of course, you will also be informed when the training has been completed. The same applies to sponsorships from the monasteries. From time to time it happens that nuns or monks decide to leave the monastery or the parents would rather have the children back at home or something similar.

Together with the money, we send those responsible the lists of sponsorships and a plan of when we want to meet which group. They then organise the meetings. We also note on the lists who will receive letters from you. This requires advance notice, which is why we ask you to send your **letters to your sponsored children by 10 September of the year** at the latest or to give it to us when we meet at one of the stands. Please send us a traditional letter, which is much easier for us than an e-mail (which we have to print out). Most of the sponsored children do not have an e-mail address, they prefer to communicate via WhatsApp or similar channels. If you want to write yourself, it is best to send postcards, aerogrammes or airmail letters without any other content. Otherwise, postmen may open the letters because they think they contain money and your mail will never arrive, which would be a pity.

A quick word about presents - unfortunately we can't take any presents with us, not even small ones, because the luggage doesn't allow it. A good alternative is to give additional money. We are happy to pass this on. Some of you are very generous, which is great. However, it is sometimes difficult in terms of the community when a large sum is given for a sponsored child. In the past, we decided with Shamar Rinpoche that we should not give more than 50 euros extra per sponsorship payment. We discussed this again with Karmapa Thaye Dorje in March 2023 and jointly came to the conclusion that we would leave it at that. This means that we will divide larger sums accordingly.

What your protégés are always happy about is a visit. So if you have the opportunity to travel to India or Nepal, please let us know. We will be happy to make contact so that you can meet up. And of course you are welcome to travel with us. We've already had a few fellow travellers.

In March 2023 it was Beate, who joined us for the second half of the tour to Takdah, Kalimpong and Sikkim.

We first travelled together from Delhi to the **Diwakar Buddhist School in Takdah/Darjeeling**. There we paid out the sponsorship money to the young monastery students and met your **sponsored children and old people from the area**. During a tour of the school, Beate learnt that it



is very difficult to keep everything dry in the monsoon. As a result, she organised a photo evening for friends on her return and raised 600 euros for a drying machine. Many thanks for that. Everything is going well at the monastery school, the boys are studying hard and some of them continue to study in.....

the **Diwakar Buddhist Institute (Shedra / university for monks) in Kalimpong/Darjeeling**. More than 100 students are now studying and living there. They complete their studies after 10 years. Afterwards they are given other tasks, such as in the administration at the Shedra itself, where three graduates always work with us and prepare everything for our visits. Some are sent to other institutes to teach there. The principle, Khenpo Wangdu, has extended the space in front of the institute and also purchased new tables and benches for the students. Now they can sit outside during their lunch break when the weather is nice.

We then travelled on to Sikkim, first to Nedo Rinpoche's **Kayathang Monastery School in Zimchung/Sikkim**. Beate stayed in the guesthouse there. Nedo Rinpoche was just in the monastery and welcomed us straight away. We received the letters to you from the English teacher and went through the list of sponsors with him. Three of the boys have decided to leave the monastery. Instead, some new ones have arrived for whom we are still looking for sponsors.

At the **Dharma Chakra Centre in Zimchung/Sikkim** there are also a number of newcomers. Many of the boys are very young, which is a challenge for the monastery management. Some of the monastery students additionally go to the regular primary school in Rumtek. In the afternoons, we always saw the group happily coming home from school. Afterwards, they continued with their activities in the monastery. The inauguration of the new monastery was delayed after all. Apart from the interior paintings, it was finished in the autumn. Now the abbot (Choetrimpa) and the other people in charge hope that the monastery can be officially opened in March 2024. Choetrimpa personally took care of the stringing of the new drums for the meditation hall.

Umze Tsueltrim Tengyal and Choetso had once again prepared everything very well for our meetings with **the children and old people from all over Sikkim** at the Dharma Chakra Centre. We meet them there every time and this time we were delighted to meet Anjali, a young woman who has completed her studies in pharmacy and has now been offered a position at the university as a junior professor. Other sponsored children have also successfully completed their education. One of the former sponsored children has now opened a café in Rumtek. Rinchen studied hotel management, then focussed on training as a chef and pastry chef and did his practical training in first-class hotels such as the Oberoi in Delhi. Locals from Gangtok come all the way to Rumtek to savour his cakes. After all, it's almost an hour's drive.

The nuns at the **Chokar Dechan Nunnery in Rumtek/Sikkim** have made good progress with the construction of the additional dormitories. Work on the extension and renovation of the old meditation hall has been ongoing since November 2022. The old hall was very dilapidated and in a poor condition due to the heavy downpours in Sikkim during the monsoon. The monastery would be very happy to receive additional donations so that the work can be completed soon. We were again invited to breakfast one morning and had a look round. The nuns were looking forward to travelling to Bodhgaya again in December for Kagyu Monlam, the wishing prayer festival, led by Karmapa Thaye Dorje. Due to the corona lockdowns, it could not take place in this form in the past three years with many participants in Bodhgaya.

Finally, we visited the **Ka-Ten Namgyalling Primary School and the Mindu Tempen Monastery in Rey/Sikkim**. Rey Lama, who founded the school and is also the abbot of the monastery, was very happy about the new sponsorships that you have taken on for the children at



the school and for the monks. He and the headmaster of the school were also very happy that all the teachers now have sponsors. This will make it easier to keep the teachers, as the school is unable to pay a high salary. They would of course be delighted to have more sponsors. The school has used your earmarked donations to buy teaching materials and games for the children, among other things. The new entrance gate to the monastery was completed.

In autumn 2023, the tour through Darjeeling and Sikkim was a bit of an adventure due to the flood disaster in North Sikkim. The National Highway to Sikkim was largely closed, so all traffic was routed via Darjeeling. After our visit to Takdah, we had to walk from the village of Teesta with our luggage through the previously flooded village (which had been cleaned up quite well by then) to cross the bridge over the Teesta River. Three of the young monks from Takdah and the director helped us. On the other side of the river, we were picked up by a Shedra car to drive to Kalimpong and from there to Sikkim. At least we were able to do the tour in the area - albeit with detours and delays.

At the **New Nalanda Tilopa Institute in Trilokpur/Himachal Pradesh**, the abbess Ani Pema Zangmo and the teacher Lhakpa Tsering also told us that the monsoon was very strong this time and that there are some families in the village around the institute whose houses are no longer habitable. Fortunately, not much has happened in the institute itself. Everything just had to be repainted. Day-to-day teaching is going well. Once a year, the teachers and students carry the collected works of Buddha in a procession through the village. This is always a special event. Other special events that the students look forward to every year are the celebrations for Karmapa Thaye Dorje's birthday and the picnic during the summer holidays. Ani Pema Zangmo would like to thank all donors and sponsors and is always happy to receive visitors to the institute.

Fortunately, there were no natural disasters in **Ladakh**. However, there was a very serious accident involving one of the monks from the **Karma Dupgyud Choeling Monastery in Choglamsar/Leh**. Karma Kunga was hit by a car when he was on his way back to the monastery in the evening. The driver hit and ran, but fortunately a shopkeeper who saw it called an ambulance straight away. However, the injuries were so severe that he had to be flown to Delhi to have an operation on his spine. When we were in Delhi, we heard that another operation was necessary. We hope that Karma Kunga is now feeling better again. We will find out more in March. The monastery has so far spent around 6,000 euros on medical care; further treatments are probably necessary. If you would like to help, please use the reference "Donation for Ladakh Monastery Accident". Otherwise, everything is going well at the monastery. The boys have lessons in English, Hindi, Tibetan, maths and science and receive their monastic education. In winter, many of the boys travel to their parents' homes when they are not also travelling to Bodhgaya for the wishing prayer festival. Classes start again at the beginning of March.

This is also the case at **the Karma Chagchen Jampaling Nunnery in Choglamsar/Leh**. The winter in Ladakh is simply too cold for all the rooms to be heated. Then the nuns move together and more nuns than usual sleep in one room. Thanks to a generous donation, they were able to buy additional heating material for the canon stoves in the autumn. Many thanks for that. As with the nuns in Rumtek, we were invited to breakfast and then had a look round. In last year's letter we told you that the monastery had received cows as a gift and that we were looking for sponsors so that cowherds could be paid. We were able to find a godmother for Tsering Paldon, the new cowherd. She and the monastery were very happy. Just like the little nun to whom we were able to give the letter from her godmother.



At the **Karma Duggyud Choeling Monastery** we met your **sponsored children and the elderly** again. We have many sponsorships for elderly people in Ladakh. They are always especially grateful for the help you give. As always, the letters and certificates for you were sent by the monastery's English teacher, Karma Jigme. He also takes care of the organisation of the monastery and our visits.

At the **Ladakh Rigjung Public School in Choglamsar/Leh**, the new area for the kindergarten children is ready. There are several classrooms and a large area for playing, which has been beautifully designed. Ms Yangchen, the manager, has started her next project, which is to create a beautiful outdoor area for the older pupils. Pavilions and covered seating areas are being built so that the pupils can eat lunch there in the shade and meet up during breaks. As cold as it is in winter, the sun is just as hot in summer in Ladakh at an altitude of over 3500 metres. A lot is being done for the school children and the Rigjung School is also happy to receive further donations so that they can realise the projects. Ms Yangchen and the teachers were particularly proud of the fact that all the students passed the inter-regional examination after year 12. This is the equivalent of the high school diploma. A 100% pass rate is of course very good for the school's reputation.

In **Nepal**, we once again stayed at the **Sharminub Institute in Raniban** and paid out the share of the sponsorship money to the institute's little monastery students. This year, Pokémon cards were very popular, which, along with various treats, of course had to be bought immediately. As it was the weekend, they played straight away and the boys had a lot of fun. In Nepal, Saturday is a day off from work. Friday morning is cleaning day in the institute. The boys clean, tidy up around the institute and in the afternoon the weekend starts for them. Then they are also allowed to watch television. Otherwise, the daily routine is very well planned, from getting up at 5.30 am to the last self-study hour after dinner at 7 pm. As many of the boys are still too young to travel to their parents' homes on their own, the institute does not close in winter and most of the boys stay there.

Most of the monks from the **Raj Maha Vihar Monastery**, on the other hand, will travel to Bodhgaya for the wishing prayer festival and many of them will go to visit their parents afterwards. Often the family lives in mountain villages or not in Nepal at all and they have little opportunity to meet them. The sponsorship money from you enables many of them to do this. Apart from that, the sponsorship money is of course used to buy teaching materials, books and small everyday items. Many thanks from them to you.

Many thanks also from **the children and elderly people** who come to the institute to hand in their post and documents to you. Many of them are now studying at colleges or universities.

The small **Nerjana Retreat Centre** belongs to the Sharminub Institute. A retreat centre where 10 old monks (lamas) have been doing their meditation practice for many years. We met them and had the task of thanking you all and saying that they are making wishes for you. It is always very touching with them.

We hope you have all received the letters from Nepal or India from your godchildren by now. It sometimes takes a little longer for our local representatives to forward the collected mail, as there is not always a post office „around the corner“. Sometimes, however, the delay is also due to other things - in Sikkim, the mail from the spring was returned to the sender. The post office had given incorrect information about the postage rates to Europe and so the mail was not forwarded! The letters were then sent again.

Last but not least - a thousand thanks to all of you for your generous donations last year. Last year, you donated a total of 354.826 euros for sponsorships, special purpose donations for projects and



emergency aid. You are now supporting the people in India and Nepal with 1114 project- or personal sponsorships.

Last year, there were also individual donations from special campaigns, for example, where you asked for donations for Himalaya Hilfe instead of gifts for birthdays or other occasions. Many thanks for this. Many thanks to all those who support us with their energy, knowledge and advertising for Himalaya Hilfe. We are very happy about the many good connections that have been made as a result. It's fun with you!

We wish you all a healthy, successful and happy New Year 2024.

Your Himalaya Hilfe Team