



NEWSLETTER

Nying-Jey Projects for Tibetan Communities (Australia) Inc

JUNE 2021

Greetings to all NJP sponsors and friends

Since our last newsletter in December 2019, NJP Australia has had sparse communication with our beneficiaries and volunteers on the ground in Tibet and India. In truth there had been little to report. Communities have been in severe lockdown in both India and Tibet with movement and activity being heavily curtailed.

Communications in 2021 have mostly been of a disturbing nature as you will see from the following articles due to the decisions of authorities in Tibet and coronavirus in India. However, there is cause for optimism; Geshe Sonam and the NJP organisation remain committed to the NJP goals of making life better for Tibetan monks and nuns and providing opportunities for young Tibetans in the field of education, wherever we can.

AUTHORITIES IN CHINA CLOSE NJP OPERATIONS IN TIBET

Almost twenty years of NJP work supporting student nunneries in Tibet has ended abruptly.

Without prior notification or warning of changes to NGO registration requirements in China, Nying-Jey Projects has been informed that the organisation cannot continue to operate in China. Funds held locally for distribution to students were confiscated without option for appeal.

Over recent years, local authorities have become increasingly more obstructive to NJP meeting with students and nuns to distribute

sponsorship funds. Covid restrictions throughout 2020 further hampered attempts to distribute funds to students.

In March 2021, however, the authorities finally stepped in to shut down all contact between the local Tibetans and this organisation.

NJP president Geshe Sonam Thargye, made concerted efforts to change the situation through diplomatic channels,

but it quickly became clear that regardless of operating in full transparency with the local authorities, NJP can no longer operate in China.

Despite NJP operating in the Ganzi region since 2002 as a non-political, non-profit sponsorship organisation, NJP has been informed that any further operations by NJP in China would be met with fines and imprisonment.



Remembering the achievements of almost 20 years supporting the children, the nuns and young adults of the Ganzi region of Tibet.

VACCINATIONS FOR MONKS AT SERA MONASTERY

Seventeen hundred monks at Sera Monastery receive injections of India's covid vaccine.



Monks at Sera Jey Monastery aged 18-44 received their first vaccinations recently following a fund-raising effort initiated by Geshe Sonam Thargye president of Nying-Jey Projects and Spiritual Director of Drol Kar Buddhist Centre in Victoria.

Geshe Sonam became aware that conditions at Sera Jey had become extremely difficult. Many monks had contracted coronavirus and the rest have been in strict lock down for

many months. While monks over 45 were vaccinated by the India government, the monks aged 44 and under were not.

The solution? Organise for the monks to be vaccinated as soon as possible.

Geshe Sonam sought financial help from his many connections far and near to raise enough funds for seventeen hundred monks to receive two doses of the Indian vaccine.

The response was overwhelming with donations offered by many families, individuals and Buddhist Centres.

Sufficient funds were raised to vaccinate the monks at Sera Jey, and Geshe Sonam was able to offer vaccination funds to several other monasteries in Sth India. Vaccinations have already commenced at Drepung, Gyumed, Tashi Lhunpo, Gaden and Sera Mey, monasteries.



Monastery life may soon return to some semblance of normal for the 6000 or so monks at Sera Monastery moving freely in the monastery, attending prayer sessions in the temple and engaging in debating practice.

This exuberant post on Facebook probably sums up how the monks have reacted to the vaccinations.

Lobsang Dorjee May 31 at 9.33am

ན་པའི་བདག་པོ་ལགས། བཀའ་རྒྱན་ཅེ།

Thanks for Rs.34 Lakhs to get vaccine two times for 1700 monks.

སྐྱེ་བོ་འདི་ཀུན་གྱི་བདེ་བ་མཛད་འདོད་ཅིང་། ། མི་རྒྱལ་གྱི་བདེ་བ་འདུག་པའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་སྤོང་མེད་མིན་ལ། ། མོངས་སྤོང་གུང་མི་སྤྱི་ཚོ་ལས་འབྲུང་མཁུན་ནས། ། ལུག་པས་དང་པོར་སྤྱི་བདེ་གཏམ་མཛད་དོ། ། ཅེས་འདི་སྤྱི་བདེ་བའི་རྒྱུ་རྐྱེན་པ་གསུངས་པའི་གཏམ་ལག་ཏུ་སྒྲངས་ནས། ། རྒྱ་ཡམས་ཀྱི་དུས་འདིར། ། འཛིགས་དངགས་དང་ན་རྟུག། ལྷག་བཟུལ། དུས་མཚན་གྱི་འཛེག་པ།

རང་གཞན་རོགས་གསུམ་གྱི་ལུས་ཀྱི་དཀའ་ངལ་དང་སེམས་ཀྱི་གཏད་བ་སོགས་ཞི་བའི་ཐབས་སྤྲུལ་མང་ 1700

ལ་ཉིན་སྐོར་འབུམ་སུམ་ཅུ་སོ་བཞི་ཡིས་སྤོང་ལབ་གྱི་ཚོས་སྤྱི་མཛད་པའི་རྒྱལ་ཆེན་གྱི་བྱ་བ་འདིས་བསྟན་པའི་ཚ་བ་དགེ་འདུན་གྱི་ལྷ་རྒྱལ་བསྐྱེད་པའི་བར་དུ་བསྐོངས་ནས་རིགས་དུག་སེམས་ཅན་ཀུན་ལ་ཚོས་སྤྱི་ཆེན་པོ་བར་མ་ཆད་པར་སྐྱོག་པར་ལྟར་ཅིག །

NJP LOOKS TO EXPAND STUDENT EDUCATION SUPPORT IN INDIA

NJP President, Geshe Sonam Thargye urged the NJP organisation - committee and sponsors - to remember NJP's mission statement of supporting Tibetan culture and particularly the education of young Tibetans. He reminds everyone of one of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's basic messages, Never Give Up, as we move into a new phase of sponsorship activity.

So moving forward, NJP committee will focus its attention solely on the Tibetan refugees in India.

Sponsorship of monks in India will continue and hopefully expand, but NJP will also focus on the education of Tibetan children living in exile in India through a collaboration with the Tibetan Children's Educational & Welfare fund, a branch of the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamshala, India.



Many Tibetan youngsters have been sent to India from Tibet by their families to receive an education in a Tibetan cultural environment. The sister of His Holiness the Dalai Lama set up the Tibetan Village Schools project to help look after these children on behalf of the families.

The Department of Education of the Central Tibetan Administration operates several Tibetan Village schools for

Tibetan children in exile in India. These schools are home for the children providing accommodation, food, clothing, and schooling to secondary level. Many of these students go on to tertiary studies.

NJP is currently in negotiation with Education Department personnel to see how we can link in with their work. NJP hopes to offer sponsorships for some of these children soon, but of course, this will depend on the needs as seen by the Education Department.

This major change in direction will certainly take time to organise, but NJP has been heartened by the many sponsors of children in Tibet who have indicated their willingness to transition with NJP. Some sponsors have already transferred their sponsorship to a monk at Sera, Gyumed or Drepung monasteries.

SPONSORS EXPRESS CONCERN FOR NUNNERIES IN GANZI

Following the actions of the authorities to close NJP in the Ganzi region, most worrying for many sponsors has been the plight of the nuns in the seven nunneries in Tibet sponsored through NJP.

We know that while the Tibet committee were forbidden to hand out payments from the 2019/20 financial year to the students, all 7 nunneries did manage to collect their money for that year. Unfortunately, there seems to be no possible way to continue any support for the Ganzi nunneries without putting the safety of our volunteers and the nuns themselves at risk.



Following many sponsor enquiries about continuing to support nuns – in India - Geshe Sonam initiated discussions with a nunnery near Drepung Monastery in South India.

Jangchub Choeling nunnery is a community of around 200 nuns near Mundgod in Karnataka State. It has a strong focus on Buddhist philosophy studies and offers Geshema degree courses for the nuns. The nunnery recently lost the support of a European sponsorship group and has been struggling financially since.

The nunnery administration has accepted the offer of financial support from Nying-Jey Projects. A portion of the funds that would have been sent to nunneries in Tibet will be offered as a financial grant for immediate medical and other needs of the nuns.

NJP has also recently received pictures and brief case histories of 20 nuns as candidates for sponsorship - a beginning in a new phase of nun sponsorship for NJP. Sponsorship for India based nuns is now available through the NJP website.

The following letters were sent out to all sponsors via email. They are reprinted here for those who did not receive the mailout, or a recap for those who did.

Sponsors of children or nuns in Tibet who have not yet responded to these letters, NJP needs to know whether you wish to continue sponsorship in some other form or to end your association with NJP.

If you have not already done so, please contact NJP via email njprojects@gmail.com as soon as possible to advise us of your intentions.

Letter to Sponsors from NJP Committee

Dear Sponsor,

As you may be aware, over recent years NJP has been experiencing increasing difficulties meeting with students and nuns and distributing sponsorship funds in the Ganzi region of Sichuan Province, China (formerly East Tibet).

Covid restrictions further disrupted any attempts to distribute funds to students throughout 2020 but fortunately we were able to distribute sponsorship funds to the nuns. More recent diplomatic tensions between China and Australia have only made our work even more difficult.

It has now become clear that, despite NJP operating as a non-political, non-profit sponsorship organisation, supporting student education and local nunneries in the Ganzi region, in full transparency to the local authorities since 2002, we can no longer operate in China.

Without prior notification or pre-warning of the changes to registration requirements being made on our organisation, we have been told we cannot continue our operate in China and all funds held locally for distribution to students were confiscated.

After exploring all avenues to retrieve the confiscated funds, we regretfully have been unable to have those funds returned.

The committee in Ganzi have been informed that any further operations by NJP in China would be met with fines and imprisonment.

This news came as a shock and has been received with great sadness, given the incredible support and positive change we have been so fortunate to be a part of for nearly 20 years. We have witnessed a transformation in the uptake of educational opportunities by young Tibetans and the subsequent launching of careers and stable employment by these incredibly resilient young people. Many of you have been on this journey with us, supporting Tibetan culture and education, for the best part of that time.

HHDL has on several occasions in the past, spoken with us as an organisation, emphasising just how important it is to support the education of young Tibetans. This continues to inspire us.

With our President, Geshe Sonam Thargye's clarity and urging, we have adopted the mantra, that reflects our mission statement, 'that we will never give up supporting Tibetan education & culture' and will now re-focus all of our attention to the Tibetan refugees in exile in India.

Many of you already sponsor monks in India, so would be well aware of our work there. For those less familiar, we will continue our sponsorship of monks in India and pivot our Tibetan children's education sponsorship efforts in a collaboration with the Tibetan Children's educational & welfare fund - a branch of the work of the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamsala, India.

Given these unexpected developments we hope that you will transition with us in our unwavering mission. Our hope is that the funds from this financial year, still held in Australia, can be put into the expanded India program. Full details will be issued as soon as possible.

We do understand that some sponsors may not wish to do this, and we will refund any sponsorship money to those sponsors who request this.

Darren Fahroedin, Vice President, Nying-Jey Projects, on behalf of the committee

Letter to Sponsors from Geshe Sonam Thargye – NJP President

Dear Sponsors of Nying-Jey Projects

By now you have been made aware of the situation that has brought about the closure of NJP operations in Tibet, despite efforts over the last few weeks to appeal to the local authorities in the Garze prefecture for a change of heart.

The news is certainly a shock and saddening especially to those of you sponsoring student and nuns in Ganzi. While we cannot change this situation, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all our sponsors for the achievements of almost 20 years of NJP activity, but especially at this time to our sponsors of students and nuns in Ganzi.

Since NJP started in 2002, the sponsorship program has helped change the attitudes of the local Tibetan population towards education for their children. It has been responsible for inspiring hundreds of young people, equipped with an education, to look beyond their boundaries and become participants in their society. And I believe it has helped to preserve Tibetan culture in the area.

Almost 700 sponsored children have engaged in primary and secondary education, because of your sponsorship. So far, in the Ganzi area 648 of the local children have received tertiary scholarships from NJP on graduation, have completed a university degree and returned to take up employment in their home district.

Sponsorship of nuns in seven nunneries around the Ganzi region has made life more comfortable for these dedicated women enabling them to study and practice in a conducive environment. We should all feel quite proud of these achievements.

In the last three years or so, it has become quite difficult to visit Ganzi and oversee the distribution of funds. The local officials have steadily increased restrictions on passing your funds onto the students and nuns, but we have persisted and found ways to get through. Now it seems clear we cannot continue.

Our sponsorship program in India is still fully operational, and there are many young Tibetans exiled in India, who also need help. I believe, and the NJP committee fully supports, a shift in direction of our efforts to help these children.

Most of the Tibetan children in India have been sent there from Tibet by their family to receive an education in a purely Tibetan environment, and where they receive tuition in Tibetan language. Their families are

Sponsors of the nuns in Tibet will understandably be sad that contact and sponsorship with the nunneries is no longer possible. However, we have many monks in the monasteries in India, who would be incredibly grateful for your help.

I remain,
Yours sincerely,
Geshe Sonam Thargye
President - Nying-Jey Projects for Tibetan Communities (Australia)

still in Tibet; the children cannot return home and their families are not permitted to leave Tibet to visit them.

These children are under the care of the Central Tibetan Administration - the Tibetan government in exile. The CTA runs several large boarding schools for these children in the Tibetan protected areas. The children receive a general education in Tibetan language, while living in a Tibetan environment. Being taught in Tibetan is so important in preserving a pure Tibetan language and preserving the Tibetan culture. Learning to read and write in English is also part of the curriculum.

The schools are supported mainly by donation from individuals and organisations in western countries. I believe that helping these children would be a wonderful new direction for NJP, so the committee is beginning the process of finding out how we can get involved in the education programs for the children in India.

We have been in contact with the Education Ministry in the CTA and hope to have more information about the possibilities in the coming weeks.

I sincerely request that if you can, please support our efforts to support the Tibetan exiled children in India. NJP operations in India are less complicated eg sending and distributing money, as well as communications with English speaking organisers and students. Sponsors will be able to correspond directly with students and perhaps, in time, visit to see, in person, the results of their support.

Once again, I urge sponsors who are no longer able to sponsor children or nuns in Tibet to consider helping NJP continue in its compassionate work in this new field of operation.