

# Fondazione Lama Gangchen Help in Action onlus

Humanitarian aid for Himalayan communities



## Activities Report 2022

## LONG-DISTANCE ADOPTIONS

Always at the heart of our activities, the long-distance adoption programme reached around 400 school-age children from poor families living in the suburbs of Kathmandu in 2022.

These children were offered, through this help, the opportunity to continue their studies and, after the first months of 2022 that were still characterised by intermittent lockdown periods, to finally meet their classmates and return to the normality of classroom life from May onwards.

Almost all of the families who had fled from the city to their home villages during the Covid emergency period returned to Kathmandu, and thanks to the efforts of the teachers and volunteers, it has been possible to gradually reconnect and get the children back to school.

During the on-site trip, the adopted children were photographed, letters from their sponsors were handed out, and report cards, letters, photos and drawings were collected.

The long-distance adoption programme also includes a number of disabled children and elderly people. Due to their extra needs the support they receive is invaluable for gaining access to medical care, therapies, special education structures, room rent, food or allowing a care-giver to be present instead of working.



The long-distance adoption programme also reached 110 young monks living in the Sed Gyued and Nyanang Phelgyeling monasteries in Kathmandu, Nepal, and Pomra Khangtsen in South India. The help they receive is essential to enable the monasteries to cover the basic needs of the children: food, clothing, medical care, education.



## GANGCHEN SAMLING SCHOOL

In 2022, Gangchen Samling School in Kathmandu was able to continue its activities – running classes from nursery to class 10 – thanks to the financial support received through the Foundation and the efforts of the excellent staff of around 40 teachers, support workers and administration personnel who showed great commitment, especially during the difficult period of the Covid emergency. Of the approximately 450 students, around 300 have been adopted at a distance and others are supported through the Emergency Fund.

As in previous the previous year marred by Covid, in the first months of the year 2022 the school was one of the few able to offer distance learning to students.

To the delight of all the students, in May, with the return to school, extracurricular activities – which had already demonstrated their great therapeutic value in the post-earthquake period – were also resumed. These activities are so important for the psychological difficulties that the Covid isolation has unfortunately caused in many children and young people: dance, music, singing and art courses.

The State S.E.E. (Secondary Education Exam) at the end of the 10th class concluded with very high marks for the children of the school, confirming the excellent quality of the training offered.



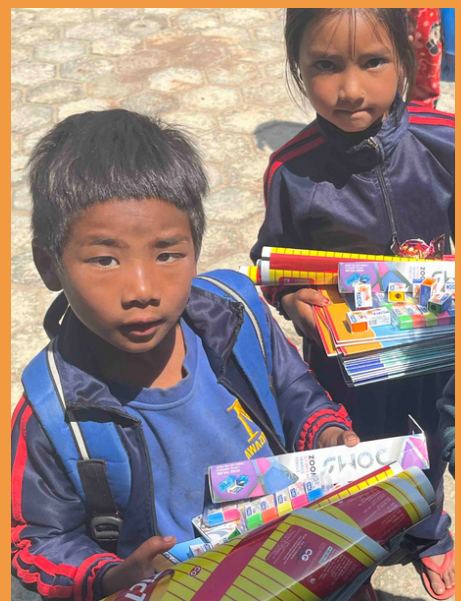


## EDUCATION FOR ALL

In 2022, 3 village primary schools in the Sindhupalchock district, in the pre-Himalayan area, with a total of 190 students, benefitted from this project. Each child received school materials for one year. These are very poor schools and villages, and for the parents textbooks, exercise books, pens and pencils are an unattainable luxury: the help is indispensable to enable the children to attend school.

As every year, all the costs for one year of the Shri Jana school in the village of Shikarpur in the Mankwanpur district, where around 70 children study with 4 teachers, were also covered.







The distribution of school materials to cover the entire academic year also reached the 110 young monks of the Sed Gyued Monastery, the 30 young children of the Disabled Children's Home, and the 44 children living in the Lotus Foundation group home and Jorpati Orphanage in Kathmandu.





## FURTHER EDUCATION

In the Nepalese education system, after the S.E.E. (secondary education diploma) at the end of class 10, there are two years of college and then access to university studies (Bachelor's degree).

In 2022, 65 students were supported through our Further Education Programme: of these, 24 are studying in college and 41 are studying for a Bachelor's degree.

Many young people over the years have already graduated thanks to the help they received: for young people from very poor families, or without a family, this is truly an extraordinary achievement.



# PROJECTS WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE ITALIAN BUDDHIST UNION 8X1000

## activities carried out in 2022

NEPAL EMERGENCY: SURVIVAL IN THE COVID ERA PROJECT *approved  
in 2021*

CHAPAKHORI VILLAGE WATER PROJECT  
*approved in 2019*

BUDDHIST EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN IN NEED IN KATHMANDU  
MONASTERIES PROJECT:  
new buildings for two monasteries  
accommodating around 180 children in need  
*approved in 2020 and 2021*

MAINTENANCE OF STUDIES IN A MONASTIC ENVIRONMENT FOR  
VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN POST-COVID ECONOMIC HARDSHIP PROJECT  
*approved in 2022*



*Con il contributo 8x1000  
dell'unione buddhista italiana*

iThe projects participated in the 'Humanitarian Projects' section and were approved by 8x1000 UBI, which contributes 70% of the total costs.

## NEPAL EMERGENCY: SURVIVAL IN THE COVID ERA

The Covid 19 emergency hit Nepal hard. Due to the very serious economic and employment implications of long periods of lockdown, the already large number of people who couldn't even buy the basic necessities for survival sharply increased. There are no social safety nets or income support tools in the country, thus creating a situation of economic emergency especially for the most vulnerable.

Thousands of families, who relocated to Kathmandu in recent decades in search of work, driven by hunger returned to their villages of origin; but here too the emergency, after successive waves of Covid, became that of survival itself. Due to the isolation of the villages caused by long lockdowns, the lack of economic resources caused by the disappearance of the small agricultural trade towards the cities, the loss of work for the heads of families, the new mouths to feed, made it impossible for many families to procure the essential goods on which the simple Nepalese diet is based.



The Project entailed the purchase and storage of basic foodstuffs (rice, flour, lentils, oil, salt) in Kathmandu, which were then distributed:

(a) to some community facilities in the city that are home to or support vulnerable people, including:

**Jorpati orphanage:** 40 children and young people without families;

**Disabled children's home:** 30 children and young people with disabilities;

**Sed Gyued and Nyanang Phelgyeling monasteries,** which house about 170 young monks, most of them without families or from families that are unable to provide for them;

**Gangchen Drupkhang** for years a point of reference and help for extremely vulnerable people in the area (elderly, disabled, infirm, single mothers).

Food distribution has reached hundreds of families in need on the outskirts of Arubari.





**b)** to twelve villages identified as particularly isolated and in distress, in remote districts of the Himalayan areas of: Makwanpur, Nuwakot, Ramechhap, Sindhupalchok, Bhojpur.

The foodstuffs were transported to the villages, on the difficult Nepalese roads, by truck. The distributions then took place between the end of 2021 and start of 2022 by monks from the Sed Gyued, Phelgyeling and Serpom monasteries, who were also crucial in identifying the areas of greatest difficulty.





The local authorities took part in all the distributions, ensuring a fair and equal distribution according to their population lists and number of family members. In total, more than 7,000 people in desperate need were reached by the aid.

## CHAPAKHORI VILLAGE WATER PROJECT

The village is located on a hilltop in the pre-Himalayan Bagmati region, southeast of Kathmandu. The population lived without the immediate availability of water resources for human consumption, hygiene and for their animals needs.

The water supply in the area was further depleted by the 2015 earthquake. Every day, and sometimes several times a day, people had to walk a long path – downhill and then uphill with heavy canisters on their shoulders – to reach a small spring at the base of the hill.

In 2019, new springs at the base of the hill had been located by drilling bore-holes. The second phase of the project – a pumping system to take the water uphill to some main points in the housing clusters in the village at the top of the hill – was planned for 2020. Unfortunately it was not possible for our experts to travel from Italy. The Nepalese government's bans on entry and movement in the area following the Covid emergency, forced the activities to be postponed to 2022.

In April 2022, Engineer Greggio and geologist Dr. Galli were finally able to carry out a field trip to the site to verify the situation and initiate contacts with local companies for the continuation of the work. They found the situation at Chapakhori was optimal, with a good flow of water even from a third hole amongst those drilled at the base of the hill.

Through contacts in the Geology Department of Kathmandu University, another company was found, as unfortunately the previous one – due to the difficulties of the Covid period – was no longer able to ensure its services.

There was also a further difficulty due to rising prices in Nepal, especially for iron and steel materials, as a result of the general increase worldwide. All quotations were updated with the new company, and work in Chapakhori finally started again in June 2022.

As foreseen by the project, the villagers formed a Standing Committee to manage the works and to connect and maintain the power line required for the pumping system.

The necessary materials (pipes, posts, gabions, tanks, fences, cement, stones, etc.) were purchased in Kathmandu. After setting up the construction site in Chapakhori, work was carried out to create the bases for the collection tanks and the construction of the water pump housing site. This work was also carried out with the cooperation of workers from the village.

In September 2022, the work of the slope protections and gabions was also completed and the final pipeline route from the base of the hill up to the village was finalised. However, the fieldwork revealed a difficulty related to the lack of a three-phase power line to the village, necessary for the proper functioning of the machinery from Italy, and the need to register the new water sources with the relevant authorities.

For the construction of the new three-phase line, unforeseen adjustment works were necessary, as well as the purchase of an alternator. The registration of the water sources was carried out.





Between November and December 2022, during the field trip to Nepal by the geologist, engineer, two electricians and a plumber, the project was concluded with the installation of the pumps and electrical panel, which allowed the pumping of water up to the storage tanks and on to the taps in the village.



The field trip to Chapakhori – despite many technical difficulties encountered on site – was successfully concluded, thanks above all to the patience and expertise of the Italian experts. In particular, the start-up difficulty linked to the new three-phase line with a transformer, which did not provide a constant voltage for the pumps to work properly, was resolved. The keys to the system and, of course, the instructions for proper management were handed over to the specially created village committee.



During their stay in the village, new requests emerged from the inhabitants. In particular, other clusters of houses on the Chapakhori hill, compared to those initially planned, requested that a pipeline with new taps be brought nearer to them. The cost of this new pipeline was not foreseen in the initial plan: however, it was difficult to refuse them, so the extension of the pipeline was carried out.





In January 2023, work was finally completed on the distribution of water from the uphill collection point to various locations in the village, with pipelines and taps installed.

Having water close to home is an unimaginable improvement in the quality of life for these people, and in particular for the women, who were resigned to walking up the hill with 20-litre canisters of water on their backs....

# BUDDHIST EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN IN NEED IN THE MONASTERIES OF KATHMANDU:

new buildings for two monasteries accommodating  
about 180 children in difficulty

- **Sed Gyued Monastery:**

Is presently home to around 130 children from very difficult situations, and 23 adult monks. Before the terrible earthquake that struck Nepal in 2015 there were only 25 monks but many children, mostly from remote villages, were taken in after losing their parents in the earthquake; others because they were living on the street, or at the request of families no longer able to provide for their needs. Many also arrived in 2020 following the severe economic hardship caused by the Covid emergency, which pushed many families into extreme poverty.

The Monastery's income relies mainly on donations and is always in a state of emergency, yet the monks have tried not to turn down requests for help.

Aware of the responsibility it has for the future of its young guests, the Monastery obtained governmental registration as a school. The children now follow the national Government curriculum so that anyone who decides to leave the Monastery will have received, in addition to training in Buddhist principles, an education that will enable them to enter the world of work.

The Monastery, however, found itself in serious logistical difficulty due to the lack of classrooms: classes were held in unsuitable spaces, cut out here and there: in the dormitories, in the temple, in the dining hall, on the floor of the courtyard.



The Monastery asked for help with the construction of a new school building. An architectural and structural design with strong earthquake-proof foundations was drawn up by a Kathmandu-based firm. Construction work on the new three-storey building started in 2020: the chosen company did an excellent job and carefully kept to the agreed timeframe.

After a careful analysis of the water supply in the Monastery by a specialist company, the water was found to be insufficient in quantity and also in quality. Given the priority of ensuring the young students and the new building an adequate water supply, a water capture and purification system was designed and installed, with filters and storage tanks.



In May 2022, the work was completed and the building inaugurated (although the classrooms on the ground floor had already been in use for some time due to the extreme urgency of having space for classes): a day of celebration and great joy for the Monastery!

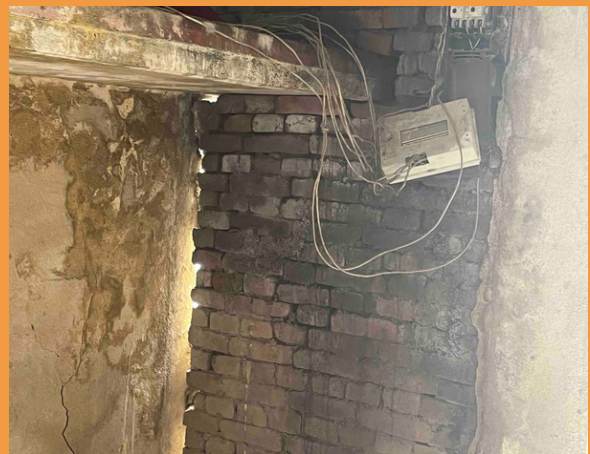




- **Nyanang Phelgyeling Monastery**

Unfortunately, the main building, built 50 years ago, suffered serious damage in the 2015 earthquake: the walls and ceilings had deep cracks that were becoming more and more evident as the months passed, it was raining into the classrooms and in the rooms of the young monks. The small kitchen was also very old and unhygienic and there was no dining hall big enough to accommodate all the monks.

Despite economic and logistical difficulties, the monastery generously took in many children who had been left without a family after the earthquake, or whose families were no longer able to care for them. Many requests for shelter also continue to arrive after the economic emergency caused by Covid, and today there are about 70 young guests. They receive accommodation, medical care and education within the monastery.



The serious safety issues of the building in which the youngsters were housed prompted the Monastery to ask the Foundation for help with a complete reconstruction: the new architectural and structural design with earthquake-proof foundations was drawn up by a Kathmandu-based firm. The project includes a new kitchen and dining hall capable of accommodating all the monks on the ground floor, and rooms for the small monks on the upper floor.



Work started in October 2022: when the unsafe building was completely demolished, to the great joy and gratitude of the Monastery, which saw a seriously dangerous situation finally come to an end.

As of today (April 2023), the rubble has been cleared, the excavation for the foundations has been carried out, the earthquake-proof foundations and the reinforced beams have been concreted... The structural work has reached the first floor and is expected to be completed (the ground and first floor, are approximately 330 square metres) in around 9 months.



# MAINTENANCE OF STUDIES IN A MONASTIC ENVIRONMENT FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN POST-COVID ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

Serpom Monastery in Bylakuppe originates from the Sera Monastery in Tibet, founded in 1419: re-founded in India in 1970, it is registered as a non-profit organisation and Monastic University. Today it houses 550 monks, among whom 205 children and young people. They come from the surrounding villages, but many also from the poorer areas of the Indian and Nepalese Himalayas, and from Sikkim. Many were admitted having lost one or both parents, others come to the Monastery requesting help, because their families are unable to take care of them: requests often come through monks for children from their own villages. Most of the newcomers have never had the chance to attend school.

Several times in recent years this Monastery in South India, whose school educates more than 200 children studying in class 1 to 6, has asked financial help for school materials, food and other various needs of the little ones.

Over the past two years, the severe economic difficulties related to the pandemic have led to a huge increase in new applications from families who are, at least temporarily, unable to care for their children. Many families live by begging or working day jobs, and the pandemic has driven them to despair. In the last two years, the Monastery has tried not to close its doors, welcoming as many as 78 new young guests.

The monasteries survive thanks to donations and often find themselves in a state of emergency and with few means at their disposal. In this period in particular, the economic difficulties on the international scene caused by the pandemic are also affecting the Monastery's income, increasing uncertainty, while on the other hand requests to take in new children are increasing sharply.

The monastery offers the children accommodation, food, clothing, medical care, and guarantees the youngsters right to education. The children are divided into small 'family groups' according to age and origin; two/three adult monks take care of each group.



Understanding the responsibility towards the children in its care, the Monastery ensures that in addition to their monastic education, they also receive ordinary schooling, which will give them better chances for the future whether they decide to take vows and remain in the monastery or not.

Serpom Monastery therefore registered with the Karnataka State authorities an in-house school, the Serpom Education Society, which has 8 external teachers for the curricular subjects, (English, Tibetan, mathematics, science and social studies) as well as 5 monastic teachers who guide and supervise the sessions of memorisation, recitation of prayers, traditional Buddhist art and preparation of ritual materials. The school is open 6 days a week, has 8 classrooms and accommodates classes from nursery to class 6.

The approved project includes the purchase of 2870 books (7 books per year per student), 5740 exercise books, 410 sets of pens, pencils and sharpeners, corresponding to the estimated needs for 2 years for the 205 students.

Ensuring adequate nutrition for 205 children is a big commitment: every day the kitchens prepare large quantities of rice, chapati (thin bread), lentils and vegetables. This project provides all the necessary foodstuffs for one year. In order to guarantee the young guests all the necessary nutrients, as requested by the Monastery, the project will also guarantee them a portion of fresh fruit and milk every day. These goods are rather expensive, so the children currently only receive a portion of fruit twice a month.

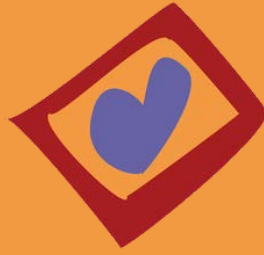
At the moment, the young monks have only one set of clothing, which they generally reuse still damp after washing, and as footwear they have only rubber slippers: each child will have a second set of clothing and a pair of good shoes.







# Thank you all for your valuable support!



— Together we can —

*Lama Gangchen Rinpoche*

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