



I am delighted to share this year's DCT Summer Newsletter. **Projects in Darjeeling are now firmly back in full swing**, and you can read below about some fantastic work our Darjeeling-based team has been doing to arrange [much-needed dental checks](#) for our children, and about work to [install a water-harvesting tank](#) at the KBM Children's Home, as well as an update on our [Child Sponsorship programme](#), and [hospitality](#) and [beauticians training](#).

For the last year Trustees have been working closely with two Darjeeling-based NGO experts to conduct a needs assessment for children and young people in the town. **This summer we've used those findings to set a future direction for the Trust** which - alongside continuing our child sponsorship scheme, vocational training and support for the KBM Children's Home - focusses our efforts on providing children with **wraparound life skills** which they may not learn at school, and with **help with career planning**. We'll be developing projects in these areas over the coming months. Already, some of our teenage sponsored children are signed up for adventure leadership training at the Himalayan Mountain Institute this autumn, and others have benefitted from online training in goal setting, CV writing and communications. We're aiming to increase this kind of opportunity for children and young people, plugging a gap in the provision currently available in Darjeeling.

Finally, you can also read below about some of the [fundraising events](#) we've held in recent months, and of course find details of our upcoming [Green Shoots and Strong Roots Ball at the May Fair Hotel in London on 19th November](#). We're really looking forward to catching up with our supporters and celebrating how much we've all achieved together. **If you haven't bought your ticket yet, don't delay, as they are selling out fast!**

Best wishes,

Katherine Carr
Chairperson
Darjeeling Children's Trust

Child sponsorship

It has been a busy year for the sponsorship team at DCT. Aashwin - our enthusiastic DCT member in Darjeeling - has been busy meeting and interviewing all of our sponsored children. After a long and tedious lockdown, these meetings were invaluable. Aashwin was able to get to know the children personally, find out how families are coping post-lockdown, and how the children coped with online learning. This has been an incredible challenge for many of them. We have since been able to put in place **extra help with learning support, buying equipment, and even help with travelling to school**. We also identified that some children did not have enough 'wet accessories' for the approaching monsoon. We sent over the necessary funds and Aashwin organised for every child to have what they needed – resulting in many happy smiles (behind the face masks!) from the children with their new dry gear (pictured below).



To make up for some of the learning lost during Covid, we have provided **one-to-one support for all the students in Class 12** (A-Level equivalent), focussing on what they need for their upcoming exams. All of our sponsored children have plans going forward, and we are helping/supporting them as much as we can with their choices.

Lisa Glydon, our Sponsorship Lead, has sent personal update emails to sponsors regarding their sponsored child. At present we are reviewing how we provide these updates in future, and this is subject to some change – we however, all of our sponsors will continue to receive regular updates.

The difference that sponsorship can make to a child's life is clear from the many humbling handwritten letters we have received from our sponsored children this year. Muskan, one of the sponsored girls, recently wrote:

"I am very much grateful for my sponsors who have helped me accomplish over the years. I would like to express my sincerest thanks to you for sponsoring my education for the year since 2015-2022. For everything you have done for me in the past and everything you still do and will continue to do. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the school supplies you gave

to me every year. Without you most generous contributions I don't know how I would have managed to balance my studies."

The lives of the children have changed because of the kind, generous donations given to educate and support them. They are so very grateful and feel honoured to have this help. It is a motivating factor for them in wanting to have a happy, fruitful and successful life, and to contribute back into society as a way of showing their thanks.

Your invaluable support in providing ongoing sponsorship not only has beneficial impacts now, but will have far-reaching effects for generations to come.

Dental Health Camp, August 2022

Report by Aashwin Pradhan, DCT employee in Darjeeling

The dental facilities in Darjeeling for the needy are very poor. I am happy to report that a '**dental camp**' conducted by a dental team of Sikkim for our children at Kripasaran Buddhist Mission (KBM) was **a great success**. The **team of dental surgeons and technical officers** were professional and systematic. They were all government dental surgeons. The team, pictured below, was headed by Dr. Shivani (nodal officer and dental surgeon).



98 children and young adults were taken care of by the team, including 71 children and young adults who live at the KBM Children's Home and 27 of our sponsored children. The dental surgeons conducted **basic dental screening, extraction and restoration of the teeth**.



Above: children and young people meet with the dental team and have their teeth checked.

The technical officer conducted a talk/program on IEC (Information, Education and Communication) for all the students. **Free oral health kits and basic medicines** were given to all students by the dental team.

At the end, Dr. Shreya met with the dentists and feedback was collected. **The good news is none of our children has serious dental issues.** For some, x-rays and follow-ups need to be done at a local dental clinic, and we will make sure they have the follow-up care they need.



Above: one of the smaller children has a dental check-up.

The dental team were very impressed by the work DCT has been doing and they have promised us that they are on our side, and that next time they will continue to voluntarily help our children and make it a grander dental health camp. It was very generous of them to come all the way from Sikkim and conduct a dental camp for our children.

Thank you for making this a success and setting yet another benchmark in Darjeeling.

Vocational training at the Food and Craft Institute (FCI)

Report by Aashwin Pradhan, DCT employee in Darjeeling

The FCI is an esteemed government institute in Darjeeling which trains students for the hospitality industry. FCI has a very good reputation and every single one of the many students we have supported through its courses over the years has gone on to worthwhile employment in the food or hospitality industry.

DCT has a very healthy collaboration with FCI, and this long relationship has helped many young adults to get a job to support themselves and their families. **Every year, DCT sponsors 10 young adults for the FCI** who have completed their schooling. The FCI sessions comprise 9 months of theory and practical learning at the Institute, and 6 months of industry training in renowned 5-star hotels in the metropolitan cities of India.



Above: Cooking up a storm in the training kitchen!

This year's batch of students shared a good bond with me as **we formed a book club** and read a novel together entitled: *Béyul – The Hidden Lands*. The objective was to **gain confidence in speaking basic English**. For students like Prem Rai, who previously worked as a day labourer, they were seizing a novel for the first time. Most of them had single parents. Most of their parents worked as labourers or housemaids. Some students were very introverted and

did not speak a word at the beginning. Some were very energetic, and wanted to stand out and speak, but they lacked some simple communication skills.



Above: a group photo outside the FCI building, and some of the students show off their book club novels.

The students and myself met every day to read the novel. **Their zeal always inspired me** and in turn they helped me to improve my vocabulary. We came up with the idea of flashcards. We would write a difficult word on one side of the card and write the meaning on the other. Then we would quiz each other.

When our Trustee, Tshering Huber, visited Darjeeling from Switzerland, she conducted **many classes to improve their English** (pictured left, below). On the other hand, our Darjeeling-based Trustee, Major Wangdi, gave **pep talks to motivate the students** (pictured right, below) and we often visited FCI. Pasang, an FCI graduate who was also sponsored by DCT through his school years, is now **working in one of the best hotels of Darjeeling**. He too gave suggestions and tips to these students (bottom picture, below).





Now, **these students are in one of the top hotels in India**, still learning and showing their determined perseverance in industry training. Their theory and practical results are out. **The 'toppers' from each department are our sponsored students.** They have made themselves and their parents proud.

We are always happy when our students do well. Soon they will start working, and their dream of supporting their families will come true.



Above: Two FCI graduates at an external work event.

[DCT-sponsored beauticians:](#) **Helping young women to become independent**

Report by Marilyn Adams, DCT Trustee

Every year, DCT sponsors up to six young women to train as beauticians.

This year, four young women have taken up the challenge and are now nearing the end of their course. Under the tutelage of the local salon owner, they have learnt a range of skills, including the best products to use in different circumstances; how to pluck eyebrows; how to apply henna patterns to skin; and how to cut and style hair.



Above: Trainee beauticians are given guidance on how to choose products.

Once they qualify, **they are able to work from home or in a salon in Darjeeling or their village**, and whilst some choose to stay where they have been brought up, others have taken the opportunity to travel to other parts of India to take up new challenges there. Previous students now work in places far from the hills in Bangalore, Orissa and Delhi, **making new lives for themselves in new places and having new adventures.**



Above: Manisha, a former student, now works in a village beauty parlour.

This year, as in 2019 before the pandemic struck, the young women and their teacher will **visit the girls at the Children's Home and offer them a free haircut**. Last time it caused great excitement and, after initial nervousness, the majority of the girls decided it was a big treat – including one who had long hair, which reached as far as her waist, cut into a short bob! It looked wonderful, but it was a big decision....

We wish the beautician students all the best as they complete their course and use their skills to support themselves and their families.

Capturing the Rain! **Water Harvesting Project at the Kripasaran Children's Home**

Report by Marilyn Adams, DCT Trustee

Despite the heavy annual monsoon rain, water is often in short supply in Darjeeling over the dry winter months because water capture and distribution facilities are limited. It has been a great achievement to have been able to include a **large new water harvesting tank** into the final phase of the redevelopment of the Children's Home. It hasn't been an easy task. The site of the Home is steep and space for construction is limited. In addition, Darjeeling lies within an area of earthquake risk, both important factors in the design and construction processes.



The site's steepness precludes the use of machinery for either demolition or construction works, all of which had to be done by hand. **Site conditions were difficult**, with a mixture of loose unconsolidated soil and large boulders, and these had to be broken up manually. These **waste materials**, which needed to be removed from the site, **and materials such as cement and bricks** which needed to be brought to the site, **all had to be transported manually** up or down a steep, stepped pathway (pictured above).



The water tank itself is a significant feature, with **10-inch-thick brick walls reinforced by thick steel**. By building it into the slope (pictured above left), its impact has been reduced and its **flat concrete capping will form part of the play area** available to the young people (pictured above right). The water gathered in the tank will make **a significant contribution to personal hygiene and clothes washing** during those months of the year when little or no rain falls. Before this, additional water had to be purchased, which has been a major financial burden for the Home. The need for additional bought-in supplies will therefore reduce significantly over the year, allowing funds to be diverted to other elements of care of the young people.

Pictured below: the rain coming down, and the girls enjoying a good supply of water in their new bathroom!



Darjeeling Children's Trust would like to thank all our donors and also the members of the United Nations' Women's Guild for their generosity in supporting this project. Your contribution is greatly appreciated by the Trustees and by the young people who live at the Kripasaran Children's Home.

Darjeeling Cup Charity Golf Event 2022

This year's **Darjeeling Cup** was held on 24th June at Pontefract & District Golf Club. The sun was shining, and a **grand turnout of 36 players** enjoyed an afternoon of healthy competition for the individual and team prizes!

The event is organised every year by DCT Trustee Hugh Heron: "I was delighted to connect again with the many players who have supported the

Darjeeling Cup over a number of years, and also to welcome quite a few new faces.”

Altogether, with entry fees, sponsorship and generous donations, **we raised over £4,500** to help the children in Darjeeling. We hope to have many more successful Darjeeling Cup events in the future.



Darjeeling Cup winner Phil Crewe (above centre) had a magnificent round with a Stableford score of 41 points. On his left is **Pontefract Club Captain John Atha**, and on his right, **professional golfer Dan Gavins**. Dan made a guest appearance to help with the prize presentations. He is the son of DCT volunteer Sue Gavins, and is currently playing on the European Tour.

Thank you to everyone who took part, and to the sponsors and donors!

Support from North Point and St Paul's Alumni

Darjeeling Children's Trust continues to get support from both alumni groups from the wonderful schools in Darjeeling, **St Paul's and North Point**. We've always been lucky enough to receive an invitation to the annual lunch of both groups until COVID-19 forced a pause. However, this year both the schools had their annual lunch, and our co-founder and Trustee Sharan Patel was able to attend. David Medland – Senior Advisor to the Trust and an Old Paulite – asked Sharan to give an update about the progress in Darjeeling and future plans. Overall, the outcome was very positive, with **many alumni scheduled to attend our forthcoming Ball**.

A Gathering at Brigadiers

Back in April we held **our first post-lockdown in-person event**: a small gathering of supporters at the Brigadiers Restaurant in London. The purpose was to create a springboard for our major fundraising event this autumn – the **Green Shoots & Strong Roots Ball at the London May Fair Hotel in November**.

A small number of DCT trustees were joined by fourteen supporters and, following an update from our Chair we engaged in roundtable introductions, with fascinating stories relating attendees' association with DCT or the town of Darjeeling.

There was a great atmosphere in the small "Bidi" dining room, with an understanding of DCT's shared purpose and vision. The evening proved to be a great success, with pledges from many to take a table at the Ball and generous offerings of sponsorship and auction prizes. At the time of writing, **over 90% of our tickets for the Ball have been reserved**.



Green Shoots and Strong Roots Fundraising Ball **May Fair Hotel, London, 19th November 2022**

After more than 3 years of enforced waiting, we are delighted to be hosting another **fundraising ball**. Seeds planted by DCT many years ago are now firmly rooted, and **new and exciting projects are about to blossom**.

None of this would be possible without our friends and supporters, and we are also extremely **grateful for the support of the May Fair Hotel** in making this event possible. We look forward to **celebrating achievements with old friends**, and to **meeting many new friends** to share our story and vision.

This will be a night of **celebration, dining, and Bollywood dancing**, raising funds to support the children in their new home and other ground-breaking projects. Live entertainment is being provided by **the amazing JIYA**, a fusion of East meets West.

A welcome drink, canapés, sumptuous three-course dinner, wine, and scintillating entertainment are all included. If you haven't already signed up, there are a limited number of tickets left at £100.00 per person.

We would love your support and offers of auction and tombola prizes, please!

For more information, **please speak to your usual DCT contact** or **email events@darjeelingchildrenstrust.org.uk**.

We can't wait to see you there!

We give disadvantaged children in India a brighter future. Working with local schools and orphanages and employing local people in Darjeeling, we aim to help young people in whatever way is best for them - through education, healthcare, and vocational training amongst many other things. Our trustees are all volunteers and every penny raised goes straight to our projects on the ground.

[Make a donation](#)



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