



Winter NEWSLETTER

February 2024

Dear friends & supporters,

Spring feels like it's just around the corner but, just before we say goodbye to the winter, I am pleased to share our latest newsletter, full of updates and activity in Darjeeling. Construction work at the Kripasaran Children's Home is now in its very final days, with the new kitchen now complete. To complement the new facilities, we have been able to fund an expanded diet for the children based on a nutrition plan developed by Dr Shreya and her medical team. This new plan will provide a well-rounded and interesting diet for the children, making sure that their nutritional needs are met and that they have the energy and health to make the most of all the opportunities for education and development we can provide. You can also read in this newsletter about other exciting progress in vocational training, health and welfare projects, and some lovely personal successes of our sponsored children.

I'm delighted to say that, in just a few weeks, a number of our trustees will be travelling to Darjeeling to be present at the official ceremony which marks final completion of the construction of the Home, a project which we agreed to support – a real leap of faith – 15 years ago. This is bound to be an emotional occasion and is only possible thanks to the incredible help we have had from all our supporters over the years. It truly has been a team effort, and the construction of this beautiful building will provide a safe and happy home for many years to come for children who would otherwise live in very difficult circumstances.

Writing today, I still have our online event from last weekend fresh in my mind. Thank you to all those who were able to join; it was a lovely opportunity to reflect on what we have all achieved together over the years. The focus of our fundraising plans will now turn to our next big gala event – please save the date for our Ball at the May Fair Hotel in London on 23rd November. On behalf of all our trustees, I would also like to register my gratitude to the Rajaram and Laxmibai Shinde Charitable Trust, who have awarded us a grant of £8,000. This extremely generous donation will support our health and welfare projects over a number of years, such as eye camps for the children at the KBM Home, and will also support the sponsorship of children to attend good quality schools.

Finally, this is my last newsletter, as I will be stepping down from my role as Chair of Trustees next month. It will be a very sad moment, as I have been a trustee since the very first days of DCT back in 2008. However, I am leaving the Trust in the extremely safe hands of our wonderful team of trustees and employees in the UK, Switzerland and India, and of course of our many and generous supporters. Graham Cory will be taking on the role of Chair when I step away, and I have no doubt at all that the Trust will continue to thrive. And of course I will remain one of DCT's most ardent supporters.

So please enjoy reading all about our news, and I hope to see you at our Fundraising Ball in London in November!

Katie Carr, Chair



Graham Cory

HUGE GRATITUDE TO THE RAJARAM & LAXMIBAI SHINDE CHARITABLE TRUST



We were delighted to have been awarded a generous grant from the Rajaram and Laxmibai Shinde Charitable Trust, a grant-making body which, for nearly 20 years, has liberally supported medical and education charities in India. We've agreed with the RLS Trust that the most appropriate use of the grant—a use which recognises the areas in which they have been so committed for nearly two decades—would be

- to support and expand, over a period of years, DCT's work in improving eye care for children and young people in Darjeeling; and
- to sponsor children attending fee-paying schools.

Although the Rajaram and Laxmibai Shinde Charitable Trust is winding down its operations this year, we're very pleased to be the means by which the Trust's beneficial impact can be extended well into the future.

Graham Cory, Trustee



FUNDRAISING NEWS - SAVE THE DATE



Following the success of our 2022 Green Shoots & Strong Roots Ball, we're thrilled to announce our return to the luxurious May Fair Hotel in Central London for our 2024 Charity Ball on November 23rd. Stay connected for more updates on our social media channels and website.



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[darjeelingchildrenstrust.org.uk](https://www.darjeelingchildrenstrust.org.uk)

BUILDING DREAMS: KBM NEARS COMPLETION AFTER 12-YEAR CONSTRUCTION JOURNEY

Over the past few months, we have watched with anticipation as the last major component of the 12-year construction project at KBM Children's Home—the new state-of-the-art kitchen—has steadily progressed towards completion.

Initially, the focus was on the foundational elements of the kitchen. Electrical wiring was installed, ensuring that the kitchen would be equipped with the necessary power supply for all its appliances and lighting.

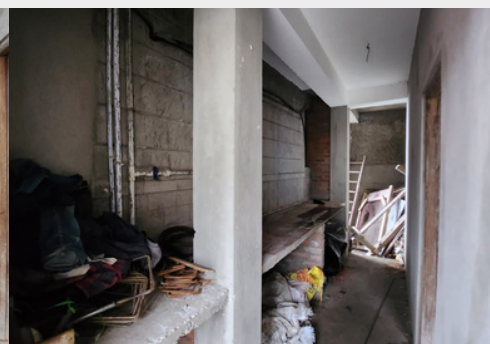
Concurrently, structural work was undertaken to ensure the stability and durability of the kitchen's framework.

Following this foundational stage, attention turned to the installation of gas pipes, and the construction of a dedicated passage to facilitate the storage of dishes and utensils, streamlining the process of food preparation and cleanup. Behind the scenes, a designated area for washing dishes and utensils was established, ensuring hygiene and sanitation standards can be met with ease.

One of the most notable enhancements to the kitchen's design was the addition of a window overlooking the dining room. This strategic placement allows for direct communication and interaction between kitchen staff and diners, fostering a sense of connection and accessibility. Moreover, it enables food to be served promptly and efficiently, enhancing the overall dining experience for both children and staff. The cook at KBM, Ms. Rai, has happily reported that the new kitchen is a very comfortable space to work in.



Completion of wiring & fitting gas pipes



Prep table & storage area



Kitchen shell is ready



Sleek and modern appliances



Kitchen open for business

BUILDING DREAMS: KBM NEARS COMPLETION AFTER 12-YEAR CONSTRUCTION JOURNEY

The safety and well-being of the children remain paramount as we near the completion of our construction endeavours. In the most recent stages of the project, significant enhancements have been made to guarantee the utmost comfort and security for our young residents.

One notable improvement includes the installation of both an outside fence and railings on the staircase connecting the activity room to the dining area.

Furthermore, security measures have been bolstered in the new activity room with the installation of bars on the windows. This upgrade ensures the protection of valuable equipment, particularly the children's new computers, safeguarding their learning and recreational activities.

In addition to safety enhancements, efforts have been made to improve infrastructure and amenities within the facility. The plumbing in the boys' toilets has been upgraded to meet high standards, promoting hygiene and convenience for our residents.

Most recently, in the middle of this month, a new floor was installed in the activity room, further enhancing the comfort and functionality of the space. This upgrade not only contributes to a more pleasant environment for the children but also underscores our commitment to providing them with the best possible facilities.

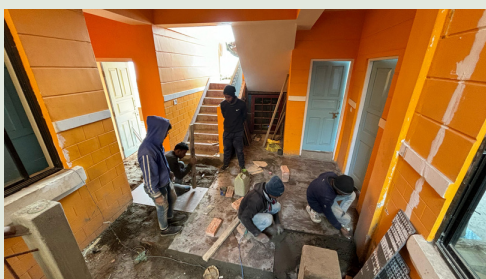
As we move towards the completion of this ambitious construction project, which has spanned over 12 years, we remain dedicated to prioritising the needs and well-being of our children. These ongoing improvements reflect our unwavering commitment to creating a safe and nurturing environment conducive to their growth and development. We would like to extend heartfelt thanks to every individual and organisation who has helped to make this dream come true.



Recreation room opening ceremony



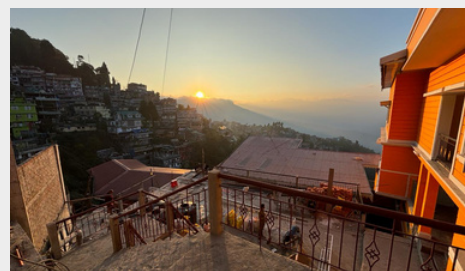
Stairs being made safe



Activity room flooring in progress



Bars to keep the computers secure



External fence to keep the children safe

KBM CHILDREN'S HOME: WARMLY WELCOMING VISITORS

At the end of October, as many of our KBM children had returned home to celebrate the Dussehra festival, the lucky few who stayed enjoyed meeting wonderful supporters Frank and Susan from the USA. They came to visit, meet the children, and learn even more about the incredible work that all of our DCT supporters make possible.



Everyone enjoyed the visits from Hannah, daughter of wonderful supporters Geoff and Amanda, and Lucinda Gibb and friends, who are equally valued DCT supporters.



Last month, KBM had the pleasure of hosting Yoshay Lama Lindblom, an incredible supporter and wonderful writer originally from Darjeeling-Kurseong. Well-known locally for her literary works including 'Beyul: The Hidden Lands' and 'The Way We Are: Stories of Darjeeling', Yoshay had already been part of a book session with our Food Craft Institute students back in 2021-22, distributing books and igniting a love for reading in the young people. This time, she admired the new library and generously pledged to send more books for the children. She also shared her desire to support DCT in various ways in the future.



UK-based couple, Neet and Hilali, brought joy by delivering lunch as part of Neet's birthday celebrations.



Neet, hailing from Thailand and having studied in Darjeeling eight years ago, cherished memories of visiting the children's home during her studies, prompting their return today to share in the festivities. Hilali, a dedicated oncologist practising in Newcastle, joined Neet in this incredibly thoughtful gesture. Their visit not only brought smiles to the children's faces but also highlighted the power of compassion and generosity in making a difference in the lives of others.

A huge thank you to all who visited KBM over the past few months - your presence means the world to the children. We are immensely grateful to our incredible supporters, near and far, for your unwavering commitment.

EMPOWERING WOMEN WITH BEAUTICIAN TRAINING

Our most recent cohort of sponsored trainee beauticians completed their course with flying colours! They wrote to our local project team to share some wonderful feedback about how this training has transformed their futures.

I Anusa Rai resident of Upper Lingsebong, Bansbotay, Darjeeling. I am writing this to express my gratitude to the Darjeeling Children Trust for providing me a golden opportunity to undergo six month fully sponsored Beautician course. Due to poor financial conditions of my family. It would not have possible for me to pursue the course on my own. I shall be able to make this as my profession and better way of earning decent livelihood for myself and my family. I have complete this six month training and the trainer is throughly professional and supportive.

Thank you, Anusa Rai



I am Suchitra Rai resident of Rosebank, Darjeeling. I am writing this to inform you that, I have successfully completed 6 months beautician course from Punam Hair Salon Cum Training Center, Motor Stand, Darjeeling sponsored by Darjeeling Children Trust. I am thankful to the Trust as well as Mrs. Punam Sharma for providing this opportunity of training free of cost. After completion of 6 months course we have been handed over Diploma from the Training Center. Now I am looking for suitable job opportunity.

Thank You, Suchitra

Dear sir maam how are you all there I am fine here and in 2023 I was trained Beauty parlour and my experience of my Beauty parlour was very memorial and I am really glad because of you all I had got this beautiful opportunity to experience lot of things about beauty .where as I finally completed my training . write now I am in kerela for my job once again thank you very much for your support motivation and encourageing me all the time and because of you all I am here today once again thank you sir and maam- Sushmita

NURSING TRAINING: TRANSFORMING LIVES

Thanks to your donations, DCT is currently sponsoring seven nursing students across the North Bengal Nursing University in Siliguri, Kalimpong Nursing School and Darjeeling Nursing School. Each of the young women has sent us a letter to express how her training is changing her life.

“

This is to inform you that I Tenzi Ongmu Sherpa who joined nursing in 2023 at North Bengal College and Hospital Siliguri . I just wanted to inform you that my 1st year Nursing has come an end an soon my 2nd year class will start . After entering nursing a lot of changes took place some had positive impact and some negative but each help me learn and made me strong . I am really enjoying nursing school as it not just involves nursing a diseased person but also makes self aware about disease and self discipline. I am fine and doing well and had made lots of friends here and I hope that you are also doing good , a very happy new year to you and your family . I'm very thankful for your help and endless support.



”

Tenzi Ongmu, 2nd year



Dipika Tamang
1st year

“

Dear sir / madam,

I am writing this letter to express my gratitude towards you for giving me a chance to live my dream. I have always wanted to be someone who could help people in their needs and now i will be able to fulfill them by pursuing nursing. When i got to know that i was selected for nursing i was more than happy and it was all possible because of you. I am enjoying my classes and have made many friends whom i can share my concerns with, also blessed with great teachers who guide us very well. To be honest i was really surprised that Mr Matthew and Mrs Jennifer came to visit me, i never expected that visited but i was really glad that you too came. Because it's rare to see the sponsors being that nice to us, anyway i will not mind a second visit and i will be more vocal next time and also i am liking Kalimpong as it is less colder than Darjeeling and we are going for our communication programme to Pedong, i will make sure to fill you up with the experiences there too.

”

“

Good evening sir/madam,

With due respect I am passang lamu sherpa student of nursing training school darjeeling would like to inform you that my studies are going well, right now I am in third year and this was my last final year and thank you so much for your support. I am so grateful for your generosity and appreciate all that you have done for me. Nursing training was hard, it's a headache and tears but it's also rewarding, we are protectors , the Guardians and the life savers. After completing nursing course we can start working in hospitals and later can move to different position in India and abroad.

There are various courses for nursing profession: General nursing, Bsc nursing, Post basic nursing, Master in nursing, PG diploma course, Phd in nursing. Thank you for your time and consideration.



”

Passang Lamu Sherpa, 3rd year

NURSING TRAINING: TRANSFORMING LIVES

“

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. I wanted to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for your generous sponsorship and support through my nursing studies. Now, I'm currently at the North Bengal Medical College And Hospital, hostel. Immersing myself in the psychiatric portion of my syllabus. It's been an intense but rewarding experience so far. From ward duty at 8 am to 1 pm to classes with my tutor, I'm gaining valuable knowledge and practice skills that will shape my future as a healthcare professional. Your sponsorship has played a crucial role in making this opportunity possible for me. It's because of your generosity, I am determined to excel in my studies and make a positive impact in the field of psychiatry. Once again, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your sponsorship. I will keep you updated on my progress.

”

Shilpa Lakra 2nd year



Dadiki Sherpa, 2nd year

“

I hope this email finds you well. It has been a year since I joined the nursing program, and I wanted to take a moment to express my thoughts and experiences.

Firstly, I have gained invaluable insights from my time in nursing, both positive and negative. One of the most significant aspects of my journey is the personal growth I am undergoing within the diverse community at NTS. Interacting with fellow students, some older and some younger, has provided me with valuable lessons and perspectives that contribute to my maturation.

Despite the challenges, the rigorous schedule demands, and limited relaxation time, I find solace in the positive aspects of hostel life. While there are some issues with accommodation, such as water shortages and shared bathroom facilities, the hostel environment facilitates group discussions and offers a dedicated space for focused study.

Balancing academic commitments and personal time has been a struggle, particularly due to the intensity of the workload and exam preparations. Nonetheless, I appreciate the learning opportunities and am committed to making the most of my education. Our recent exposure to Siliguri has allowed me to adapt to a different environment, with positive experiences regarding food and accommodation.

In my interactions with patients, I have observed contrasting behaviors between Darjeeling and Siliguri. Patients in Darjeeling are generally humble and cooperative, whereas those in Siliguri present more challenges in terms of cooperation. Witnessing the suffering of patients, especially in difficult conditions, is emotionally taxing. I find solace in offering prayers and doing my utmost to provide assistance.

Overall, I am grateful to DTC for providing me with the opportunity to pursue a nursing career. I am dedicated to becoming a compassionate and competent nurse, giving my best effort to serve the community. Thank you for your time and support.

”

NURSING TRAINING: TRANSFORMING LIVES



Srijana Tamang, 1st year

“ Dear madam/sir ,
Hello! How are you ? I hope you are doing well and I am also doing good over here .I am writing this letter to tell you about me joining the nursing training school recently. Being a nurse has always been my dream and because of you and your financial support I was able to achieve this opportunity. When I joined the institute I was very sacred and felt nervous meeting new friends but they were very warm and welcoming . Though the beginning of the day seems to be monotonous but at the end it's interesting and knowledgeable.In Darjeeling the winter seems to be very freezy but with my frequent classes and joyful environment it makes my day very lovable and enjoyable. You too should visit Darjeeling in your free time as I want to thank you in person and give you the tour of Darjeeling, my homeland .
In few weeks we will be visiting the urban and rural areas for community health program.

Till the date you have been an integral part as financial supporter for my studies and carrier building blocks it seems to be worth it as I am capable of to be me as a nursing personally that I have dreamt from my childhood .You don't need to be worried about my studies as I will be working hard for my career and make you feel proud of me.

”

“ Dear sir/madam
Hello,how are you? I hope you are doing good, I kunsang lahmu sherpa child of your Darjeeling children trust,I am also doing good in my health and nursing training session. I am writing this letter to give you a scenario of my training and current experience. From 29th January 2024 we are going for community visit as a part of our training I'm looking for the day with excitement and warmness Though sometimes training session seems to be hard but always excited to learn new things and it's different from general studies. It isn't easy for beginners but it is interesting to learn.
Some of the qualities that I have learnt the habit of adjustment, organised with my study to make new friends, 1st year in nursing training school is an excellent time to build relationships with peers , faculty members, fellow students .



Kunsang Sherpa, 1st year

I feel blessed and thankful to be part of Darjeeling children trust as it gave me opportunity to persue my career as a student nurse in Darjeeling nursing training school through channel of your scholarship , hope this support, love and care of yours will be with me throughout my journey of my studies.I will be be skilled and responsible person as a nurse and looking forward for my bright independent future.

”

DEDICATED TRUSTEES IN DARJEELING



Last October marked a significant milestone as our treasurer, Matthew, embarked on his first journey to Darjeeling. Welcomed with open arms, Matthew's introduction to the area began in style, courtesy of our project manager, Aashwin, who treated him to a delightful tea tasting session. Quickly acclimating to the altitude, he set out on a mission to forge connections with our sponsored children.

Matthew's first stop was Assembly of God School, which 10 of our diligent children call home. Amidst laughter and shared stories, Matthew explored the school grounds, engaging with the children about their aspirations and school experiences. From there, he ventured to Gandhi School, Prabhudas, Food Craft Institute, and KBM, arriving here in time to welcome Tom and his team from the intrepid London to Singapore Landrover Challenge.

Not one to miss an adventure, Matthew even embarked on a tour up to Tumling, situated at a lofty 3000 meters above sea level, in the iconic Series 1 Land Rover.



Hot on Matthew's heels, trustees Matt and Jen made their inaugural visit to Darjeeling in November. During a trip similarly filled with meaningful encounters, they witnessed the dedication of sponsored children at Camellia and Assembly of God schools, and also appreciated the trainee beauticians' skills at Poonam's Beauty Parlour. Jen even volunteered as 'guinea pig' for an eyebrow threading session.

At the Food Craft Institute, the couple engaged with our hotel management trainees, and visits to Don Bosco Technical College along with the Nursing Training School in Kalimpong allowed them to get an even deeper understanding of the workings and impact of our vocational training sponsorship project. Meeting Dipika, our first DCT student at GNM Nursing School, underscored our impact in this area.

At KBM Children's Home, the trustees were greeted warmly, with the new vibrant yellow paint reflecting the brightness within. Jen had a productive meeting with Mr. Pradhan, our careers counsellor, and Matt used his IT skills to provide valuable training to the supervisors. They rounded off their visit by presenting thoughtful gifts from friends in the UK - new mirrors, clocks and strings for drying clothes.

PROJECTS IN DARJEELING

Career Counselling

Mr. Pradhan launched another round of career counselling sessions for our class 11 and 12 students. During these sessions, students participated in online aptitude and reasoning tests to explore their strengths and interests.

The upcoming feedback from students promises to provide useful insights into how these sessions may shape their career decisions.



Health & Well-being

As part of our ongoing commitment to the health and well-being of our children and young people, KBM is launching a new project focussed on nutrition. Trustees Matt & Jen took the first steps during their visit to Darjeeling, as they met with Chewang, a local nutritionist, and Dr. Shreya, who oversees the children's health, to begin planning a practical and detailed nutrition strategy.

Our project team on the ground will continue this collaboration, ensuring that the plan meets the specific needs of the KBM community.

Food and Craft Institute (FCI)



Last August, we eagerly welcomed a fresh batch of aspiring hospitality professionals to our FCI family. Thanks to the diligent efforts of Project team Aashwin and Alok, our students were equipped with umbrellas to weather any storm and invaluable advice to navigate their journey ahead.

Six months on, and the students have grown in both skills and confidence. They are well on track for the transition to their real-life training placements in local hotels and we are looking forward to seeing the milestones they will undoubtedly achieve in the months ahead.



PROJECTS IN DARJEELING

Winter Tuition

Every winter, DCT extends support to sponsored children in classes 9 and below, providing extra assistance to those who need it most through two-hour classes, five days a week. Our focus is on addressing any areas of difficulty and offering support in specific subjects to boost confidence as students gear up for the new term.

For students in class 10 and above, their respective schools also organise coaching classes for board exams.



We're grateful to Mr. Rajen from West Point School for hosting the winter tuition classes at his home in a dedicated room conveniently located near the town square.

Craft & Textiles

After Mr. Prakash, father of one of our sponsored students at North Point College, generously volunteered to repair the sewing machines at KBM Children's Home free of charge, craft and textile lessons have gone from strength to strength.

Under the guidance of Binita, our dedicated instructor, girls at the home are actively participating in knitting and sewing classes. Their creativity shines through as they not only refine their skills but also created knitted decorations to brighten the Home during the Raksha Bandhan celebrations late last summer.

Encouragingly, junior boys are also showing interest in textiles, which expands their career prospects by adding the future possibility of becoming a tailor.

We extend our sincere appreciation to him and all contributors for fostering these skills and creativity within our KBM family.



SUCCESSSES & ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the past few months, our children and young people have been achieving incredible success, showcasing excellence in a multitude of endeavours. Congratulations to each of them!

KBM Band Group

Two boys studying at a local government high school won the award for best band group at the Independence Day parade.



Diwakar Karki

Interschool badminton tournament 1st place, and 2nd place in the Tenzing Norgay competition men's open category.



Sumiran Rai

Took first place in a 'sit and draw' competition, winning a kitchen set and drawing kit.



Sidhant Karki

Took 3rd place in the Interschool badminton tournament last September.



Smriti Chettri

Has successfully graduated from Southfield College and secured a great Front Office job at the Taj Bengal in Kolkata.



Admissions to AG School

Shivansh Thami, Ongmu Tamang and Sonam Tamang have all successfully passed the admission process to Assembly of God.



KBM CELEBRATION EVENT

We were thrilled to welcome supporters from across the globe to join us for our second online event, held on Sunday February 25th, 2024 via Zoom.

The programme began with an introduction from our Chair, Katie Carr, and various trustees who provided valuable insights into the diverse ways we support children across different project areas.

Our trustee based in Switzerland, Tshering Huber, hosted a gathering of friends at her home to view the event on a large screen, while many others connected online to embark on a journey across continents with live links to presenters in the UK, France, Switzerland and India - spanning Delhi and Darjeeling.

Ardent supporters Mike Havard and Tom Waring captivated viewers with images from their fundraising adventures. Mike shared his expedition on a Tuk Tuk from Jaisalmer in the desert of Rajasthan over to the mountains of Kashmir, while Tom recounted his epic four-and-a-half-month road trip from London to Singapore.

The pinnacle of the event was the presentation by Marilyn Adams and the team engaged in the children's home construction project; a journey spanning over 12 years. Project architect Raghavan contributed to the captivating discussion from his home in Delhi.

The event concluded with a short yet powerful film produced by Aashwin Pradhan, our project manager in Darjeeling.

For those who missed the event, a copy is available on request at info@darjeelingchildrenstrust.org.uk.

This online gathering was the result of weeks of dedicated effort and a testament to the incredible teamwork involved. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Allan and Becki Taylor from the Rotary Club of Pontefract for their invaluable support behind the scenes.

We would also like to extend a huge thank you to both Tom and Mike, and their teams, for the hard work, dedication and great generosity that they have shown in raising funds for us. Look out for more coverage of their efforts in the next newsletter!

