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# Children without chances

It's not every day that one gets the chance to meet a Tibetan Lama but when one does the simplest of lessons can make a lasting impression.



Geshe Pema Dorjee a small grey haired man dressed in traditional Buddhist attire entered the British School of Amsterdam (BSA) with a warm smile on his face as he held out his hand to greet us. Within moments the compassion and warmth of this man who gives his life to helping people less fortunate than us, could be felt by all. How lucky for us to have the opportunity to meet such a kind-hearted person who wanted to share with the children of the BSA the Concepts of Tibetan Buddhism, how we can train our minds to choose happiness and how to handle life's challenges. This unique man shared the importance of friendships, to remember that everyone has something unique and special, that we are all equal, how we should think positive and try to minimize jealousy and not to perceive a problem as too big that you cannot find a solution.

Here in the Netherlands to promote his humanitarian projects to help under privileged children in the Himalayan region, here is how the story begins.



Tibetan lama, Geshe Pema Dorjee, was born into a nomadic family in Tibet. In 1959, the family escaped to Nepal due to the Chinese occupation of Tibet and later came to India as refugees.

From 1981 to 1997 he dedicated himself to the Tibetan children's village school (TCV), first as a teacher and later as a Principal and Director for 2,500 Tibetan refugee children. In 1995 he received the highest degree in Buddhist studies the Geshe degree (equivalent to a PHD). His Holiness the Dalai Lama advised Pema Dorjee to revive and promote the Bodong Tradition, an important tradition in Tibetan Buddhism which had almost become extinct. Since then Pema Dorjee has taken on the responsibility for organising, directing and raising funds for numerous charitable projects in the Himalayan region, such as providing medical care for ill and disabled people and in serious cases bringing the sick children to Delhi for operations.

## Children without chances

Arunachal Pradesh is a restricted area in the Northeast of India, Lumla serves as a local administration center for 58 small, remote villages situated on the Himalayan mountain sides. Many of the villages can only be reached by foot, some of them take several days to reach.

Many people live in poor conditions, a common ailment amongst children is blindness or bad eye sight and many suffer from tuberculosis due to bad hygiene and medical care. Children face extreme hardship from early on in life. The older children often work on the land with their parents whilst most girls, due to lack of education, remain isolated at home their entire life looking after younger siblings. If they can only send one

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child to school or to a monastery they will send a son. Most girls will marry and have multiple child births at a very young age. Poor facilities and lack of medical care often lead to an early death for these young mothers, leaving children orphaned or having to fend for themselves. Many girls are abused and some may end up in even worse conditions in the bigger cities.

One of Pema Dorjee's 13 humanitarian projects is the Bodong Nunnery Project, a school for girls in Lumla. The objective is to provide education and housing for 40-50 girls between 8 and 14 years. It is a nunnery that offers a sound and secure environment for studying and living with emphasis on love and compassion as central values of the Buddhist roots.

### **Tara Bodong foundation**

Stichting Tara Bodong (the Netherlands) is a charitable foundation that supports humanitarian projects in the north of India and Nepal. The projects are initiated locally and overseen by Geshe Pema Dorjee.

The BSA continues to support the charity by bringing awareness of the projects to the public and creating various fund raising initiatives within the school.

If you would like to support the Bodong Nunnery Project, below are the more details:

- › Email: [stichting.tarabodong@gmail.com](mailto:stichting.tarabodong@gmail.com)
- › Bank details: 1151.38.447 Rabobank, Hilversum, Stichting Tara Bodong Netherlands
- › [www.pema-dorjee.org](http://www.pema-dorjee.org)
- › Read more about the project: [www.bodong.org/monast\\_india\\_nunnery\\_lumla\\_appeal.php](http://www.bodong.org/monast_india_nunnery_lumla_appeal.php)



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# Save the date!

This year's Christmas event will honour the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and a date has been set for Saturday 8th December.

It will be held at St Olaf's Chapel at the Barbizon Palace Hotel and promises to be a glittering event with Diamonds as a central theme.

We have a licence until late so save the date and find your dancing shoes.