# preserve Tibetan culture through education of impoverished children

## Kalimpong, West Bengal, India

# The Need

**Since 1950 Tibetan culture has been suppressed in its native land.** The Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Cultural Institute (ITBCI) was established in 1954 by the late Dhardo Rimpoche (1918-90). He wanted to provide a sound education for children from poor Tibetan families as well as pass on Tibetan culture and Buddhist values to the younger generation. In recent years the school has opened its doors to children from other communities.

Most of the families in the region are **poor farmers**. Daily labourers earn around 200-250rs (£2 - £2.50) per day. People **cannot afford to send their children to fee paying schools** which are very costly. No other school in the area offers a subsidised education to poor children and their families.

# Project Aims and activities

The aims of the school are to **preserve and promote the language and traditions of Tibet and the Himalayan region**. The project outcomes are:

1. 300 underprivileged children will gain an education. The project aims to offer at least 80% of class places to children from poor backgrounds.
2. 90% of the students will pass their year 8 final exams and 70% of students will pass year 10 final exams.
3. The children will learn their traditional languages and art forms from Tibet and the Himalayan region.
4. The students will gain confidence in extra-curricular activities such as debate, drama and sport.
5. Children will understand their own cultural Buddhist practices thereby gaining a moral as well as academic education.

The students benefit from a holistic education. The school teaches the standard Indian syllabus. The school teach through the medium of English as this has become essential to career development in India. Students learn their own traditional language of Nepali or Tibetan as well as compulsory Hindi. Around seventy of the students are boarders. These students come from difficult family backgrounds and so really benefit from a secure environment to continue their studies.

# Case Study – Tashi Dhindup

Tashi Dhindup joined the school as a student in 1996. He came from the remote border village of Musthang with the hope of learning his native Tibetan language. During Saturday classes Tashi was taught Tibetan dance and music as part of the school’s cultural programme. He went on to join the prestigious [Gangjong Doegar Performing Arts Group](http://www.gangjong.org/) and now teaches traditional Tibetan dance with the group. Tashi’s work has brought him all over the world as part of Tibetan performing art tours. But Tashi always retained his love for the Tibetan language. Last year he was appointed as Tibetan teacher in the Rockvale Academy, a well-known public school in the area. None of this would have been possible without the help of the school and its supporters.

# Sustainability

Karuna are working with the school’s management to build their fundraising skills. The project will use a fundraising consultant to build their fundraising capacity. Currently the school rely on Karuna funding and donations, regular individual givers and institutional donors. The school is also partly funded by a percentage of students who are fee paying. The school does not receive government funding.