



Tibetan Health

JAN-JUNE 2021

Includes all the press briefings of central COVID-19 Task-Force during the deadly second wave in India.

Also, all the updates of programs and projects of the health department.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, CTA

About Us

The Department of Health, CTA, manages and finances 44 health centers in India and Nepal including Ngoenga School for Tibetan refugee children with special needs apart from different health programs, projects, and activities. Tibetan Health is the official Newsletter of the Central Tibetan Administration's Department of Health registered as (Tibetan Voluntary Health Association). Tibetan Health Newsletter is published twice a year to inform and update about our health promoting initiatives to our friends, donors and supporters. This newsletter also gives you an overview of health programs, projects, activities and needs of the department. Most importantly, it covers success stories and outstanding contributions of all our field health staffs including hospital administrators, doctors, nurses and community health workers etc. This newsletter is dedicated to them, for their selfless dedication and hardwork, who is the backbone of this successful and unique refugee healthcare system. Tibetan Health is for all who are interested in the works of Department of Health.

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COVID-19 News.

40th COVID-19 Task Force Briefing: Committee pledges renewed strength to fight the global pandemic



Figure 1 Figure 1In photo: Secretary Palden Dhondup, Dept. of Health, CTA, Dr Tsering Tsamchoe, Central Council of Tibetan Medicine and Dr Tenzin Tsundue, Delek hospital.

Dharamsala: A little less than a year after its establishment, the CTA's COVID-19 Task Force Committee has done everything in its best capacity to fight the raging pandemic and its impacts on the Tibetan community all over the world.

Exactly a year ago in 2019 December, the COVID-19 infection was first reported from Wuhan city of China, and gradually, it spread to the rest of the world killing more than one million and adversely affecting the livelihood of millions.

As the battle against COVID-19 has been ongoing everywhere, the task force committee of CTA pledged its commitment to strengthening its fight against the pandemic in the coming new year, said Secretary Palden Dhondup of the Department of Health as he enumerated the activities and various projects undertaken by the committee in 2020.

“A total of 1448 Tibetans were infected out of which around 1400 recovered. This is only because of the hard work, cooperation, and dedicated service by the settlement officers and the staff and above all those working in the frontline,” added Secretary Dhondup and urged the same support and cooperation throughout.

“Despite being a small community with limited resources, the Tibetan community has successfully mitigated the worst-case scenario of the coronavirus pandemic”, he added and further advised the Tibetans to prioritize precaution and safety measures at all times.

Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe updated the COVID-19 status of the exile Tibetan community and reported that 14 new cases that week, with 1 from Mainpat, 4 from Ladakh, 1 from Ravangla, and 8 from Dekyiling. The oldest patient among them was 76 while the youngest was 1 and a half years old. According to symptoms wise, 7 were symptomatic and 7 were asymptomatic. The total cases in the Tibetan community across India and Nepal currently stand at 1448 out of which 1381 had recovered, 37 died, and 30 active cases. Those active cases were strictly quarantined and required facilities and treatments were provided.

Reviewing CTA's COVID response, Dr. Tsamchoe reported that the quarantine status of the settlement population from India and Nepal were at 257 out of which 140 were at home quarantine and 117 at the administration facilitated community quarantine centers.

SORIG distribution had reached 23,462 units covering the vulnerable, the elderly, chronic patients, including residents overseas. The breakdown of the distribution- 5573 at quarantine, 8725 people above 64 yrs, 1481 volunteers and health workers, 4040 with comorbidities, 3643 Tibetans overseas. As for mental health counseling that week, no session was held but Dr. Tsamchoe said the helpline was available all the time.

Mass testing drive across 16 settlements covered 594 Tibetans that week. Routine sanitization and disinfecting were ongoing.

"Since its emergence, the global pandemic tally has crossed over 80 million with India crossing over 10 million cases. The year 2020 tested humanity and was a remarkably difficult year of hard learning which brought an unprecedented change in everyone's lives," said Dr. Tsamchoe and urged everyone to rise above the present challenges.

Dr. Tenzin Tsundue reported that COVID cases in India were gradually decreasing as lesser cases were being reported from various states in India.

Reporting on the new strain of the virus in the UK, Dr. Tsundue said that ever since its emergence, the UK recorded its highest number of new cases as last Tuesday, 53135 cases were reported. On a good note, he informed the permit to use the *Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine* in the UK. The vaccine will be rolled out in the country from 3rd Jan 2021.

In India, 25 individuals with a travel history to the UK have been tested positive for the new strain of coronavirus.

As Dharamshala witnessed the influx of tourists to celebrate the New Year, Dr. Tsundue appealed to the public to stay away from the crowd and gatherings and adhere to the night curfew imposed by the DC office Kangra.

41st COVID-19 briefing urges continued precautions necessary to avert resurgence

Dharamsala: On 8th January 2021, addressing the 41st COVID-19 briefing, Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe updated the weekly covid-status of the exile Tibetan community reporting 25 new cases from the following regions: 4 in Dharamshala, 19 in Ladakh, 1 each in Bylakuppe and Dekyiling. Of the total new cases, 13 were male and 12 were female, and symptom-wise, 6 were symptomatic, and 19 were asymptomatic. The eldest was 71 years old and the youngest was 14 years old. No cases of death had been reported that week. With this, the total number of reported cases of the exile Tibetan community was 1473, 1392 recoveries, 37 deaths, and 44 active cases.

In the last year, the global pandemic tally has crossed 85 million cases and had resulted in 1 million deaths. In India, the total count has crossed 10 million and active cases were at 2,28,000 with a 96.36% recovery rate and 1.45% death rate, while 20,346 cases of the new variant of COVID-19 was recorded in the last 24 hours.



Figure 2 Tenzin Kunsang, Deputy Secretary of Health Department addresses the 41st COVID-briefing.

Reviewing CTA's COVID response, Dr. Tsamchoe reported that the quarantine status of the settlement population from India and Nepal was 316, with 113 in-home quarantine, and 203 in the community quarantine centers. SORIG immune boosters have been distributed to 524 people last week making the total 23,986 units provided to contacts of COVID-positive patients and quarantine residents having symptoms. Mass testing across 14 settlements in India and 1 in Nepal covered 558 Tibetans last week.

Deputy Secretary Tenzin Kunsang of the Health Department shared that the vaccination program would begin soon with the support of the Indian government and that the Health Department was coordinating with the government on the vaccination efforts and the assistance of community health care providers. Secondly, despite the wonderful news of the fall in cases within the Tibetan community through the collective efforts of the Health Department, organizations and individuals, she said that the public must continue to practice utmost precaution by following the basic measures of wearing masks, hand-sanitizing, and maintaining social distance as the new variant of COVID is rapidly spreading across the world. On the concerning reports of bird flu, she urged all to take precautions and follow the guidelines issued by the government.

Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe informed that due to the festive season and the new strain of the Covid-19, Europe had seen a resurgence in cases requiring the imposition of lockdown amidst the dire situation. In India, 73 cases of the new mutated coronavirus had been reported.

Speaking on the recently developed bird flu, Dr. Tsamchoe highlighted that the 4 states of Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh were at an increased risk of the viral disease, particularly, people working in the poultry industry. She also advised against consumption of eggs and

chicken and pointed out that the flu-like symptoms range from fever to sneezing, coughing, muscle aches, and in severe cases, breathing issues, vomiting, and diarrhea, and advised early testing to detect infection. She urged the public to follow precautionary measures like sanitizing, masking, social distancing.

Meanwhile, Dr. Tsundue informed that although bird flu has been confirmed to be plaguing birds across the state, human transmission has not been reported yet, however, he urged people working in the poultry business to be cautious and report to the hospital if any sign of flu appears.

On the dwindling cases across India in general, Dr. Tsundue reminded about scientists' prediction that expected a surge in cases in January and February and urged for continued efforts to keep the situation in control.

He concluded by sharing optimism for the mass vaccination program underway.

42nd COVID-19 Briefing: Tibetan health care workers and volunteers to get vaccine shot during pan-India COVID-19 vaccine launch



Figure 3 From Left to Right Dr Tsering Tsamchoe, Additional Sec. Jampa Phuntsok, Dr Tenzin Namdon. Photo Screengrab

Dharamsala: Additional Secretary of the Health Department, Jampa Phuntsok updated on the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines in India, which was likely to begin from 16th January 2021.

As per the directives issued by the Health Department, Additional Secretary stated that the Tibetan settlements and the respective settlement officers have had discussions with the district heads to enable an equal availability of vaccines for the Tibetan people as well. Both Covidshield and Covaxin had been authorized by the Indian government to be the safest of the vaccines for emergency use and claimed no failure as far as a safety matter was concerned.

Since the availability of vaccines at the initial stage was limited, the Union Health Ministry had prioritized groups that will receive the vaccines first and it includes health care providers and workers followed by frontline workers including armed forces and police, management volunteers, and municipal workers.

Besides that, any person above 50 years and those less than 50 years with associate comorbidities were also prioritized. Once the first vaccine drive succeeds, the general public would be administered next.

Additional Secretary also informed that almost all the names of the Tibetan health care workers and volunteers had been submitted to the respective district government. Following this, the names of those above 50 and those with comorbidities would be collected by the respective settlement offices.

“Additionally, those eligible for vaccines have the complete right to choose whether or not to take part in the vaccine drive”, said Additional Secretary.

Dr. Tsamchoe updated the weekly status of the COVID cases across the Tibetan community in India and Nepal.

According to the latest report shared by CTA’s COVID-19 Response Committee, 7 new cases were reported that week from the following regions: 3 from Ladakh, 1 from Dharamshala, 1 from Delhi, 1 from Kollegal, and 1 from Mundgod. Of the total cases, the eldest was 47 yrs old and the youngest was 27 yrs old. Symptom-wise, 5 were symptomatic and 2 were asymptomatic.

No cases of death were reported that week or the last week.

The total number of reported cases of the exile Tibetan community in India and Nepal stood at 1479 of which 31 were active cases, 1411 people had recovered and so far, 37 had passed away.

As for the quarantine status, 405 Tibetans in India and Nepal were currently at quarantine of which 262 were home quarantined and 143 at community quarantine centers. Until now, SORIG immune boosters had been distributed to 24,790 people. The mental health committee had tele-counseled one patient that week. The committee had also begun a program supporting the mental health of health care providers and frontline workers called ‘Frontline workers well-being programs’. Mass testing drive conducted across Tibetan settlements in India and Nepal covered 608 Tibetans last week.

Dr. Tenzin Namdon of Delek Hospital shared information on the upcoming vaccine rollout in India at the time.

She informed that once the vaccines were provided to the priority groups, they will be made accessible to the states according to the case wise. Earlier that week, the central government had conducted a dry run of vaccines to ensure smooth vaccines drive once it gets approved for emergency use.

The Tibetan Delek Hospital was among the centers for a dry run in Kangara Distt. informed Dr. Namdon and further added that once the shot gets approved the hospital would distribute the shots according to the priority basis.

43rd Taskforce briefing: First phase of Covid-19 vaccination begins on successful note

Dharamsala: The first phase of the pan-India immunization drive initiated on 16th January 2021 based on priority to healthcare and frontline workers was successfully initiated in the Tibetan community, Joint

Secretary Tsering Youdon of the Department of Health, CTA said on Thursday with 10 Delek hospital staff, 81 branch health center staff and from monasteries in Mundgod and 10 branch health center staff from Miao received the vaccination shot. None had reported any side effects.



Figure 4 Health Joint Secretary, Tsering Youdon

CTA Health department's virtual discussions with the Chief Representative Officer and Settlement Officers on the vaccination drive had revealed that the respective state governments were making provisions for Tibetan residents on par with Indian citizens.

Joint Secretary assured that the Department would further coordinate with the Indian government authorities for successful implementation, also mentioning that the choice to get vaccinated would be left up to the individual.

With Losar or Tibetan New Year approaching after a month, she appealed to Tibetans to refrain from traveling, however, if necessary, urged them to ascertain the situation and requirements set by the settlement COVID-committee and fully cooperate in ensuring community safety.

Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe of the Central Council of Tibetan Medicine explained that the government has not made vaccination mandatory, leaving it up to the individual decision. She informed that precautionary guidance relating to the vaccination has been issued and further queries can be clarified by the branch health center staff and those concerned.

She particularly stressed that “even as vaccines drives were carried out, precautionary measures must be followed without fail”.

Addressing concerns of side effects of the vaccine, Dr. Tsundue said minor side effects could persist for 2 days and would show up in the first- half an hour immediately after vaccination which will be monitored by the staff on the site.

He assured the side-effects were harmless in the majority of cases. However, he highlighted specific groups identified by the GOI for potential adverse effects, such as, those who display allergic reactions to the vaccine, fever, suffering from a bleeding disorder, and taking medications for the same, as well as, pregnant and nursing mothers.

As per the briefing, 11 new cases of COVID-19 were reported last week in the Tibetan community.

Region-wise includes 4 from Dekyiling, 2 from Dharamsala, 1 from Mainpat, 3 from Pandoh, and 1 from Shillong; age-wise: the oldest is 86 and the youngest is 38; gender-wise: 5 males and 6 females; symptom-wise: 7 symptomatic and 4 asymptomatic. In good news, there have been no deaths reported in the past 2-3 weeks from COVID in our community, bringing the total tally to 1490 cases, 1430 recoveries, 37 deaths, and 23 active cases.

Reviewing CTA's pandemic response, she shared that 395 people are in quarantine, of which 239 are in-home quarantine and 156 are in community quarantine centers. SORIG immune boosters have been distributed to 24,841 people at free cost, primarily to quarantine residents, comorbid patients, frontline workers, and healthcare providers, Tibetan healthcare workers based abroad, and elderly aged above 65. The mental health section has arranged spiritual teachings, in addition to training sessions for healthcare workers and as of the past week, 1 COVID- the patient was contacted who received counseling and guidance. The testing drive had covered 656 Tibetans in India and 5 in Nepal. The settlement emergency committee holds routine meetings to discuss issues as per the directive of the state and district governments.

Globally, the pandemic count had reached 94 million, among which the US was leading with 23 million, followed by India crossing 10 million, with a remarkable recovery rate of 96.8% and death rate of 1.44%.

First phase of COVID-19 vaccination rolled out

Dharamsala: January 16, 2021, marked the beginning of the world's largest vaccination drive for COVID-19 in India. Prime Minister Modi of India in his inaugural address emphasized that every individual should continue with COVID-19 appropriate behavior to fight this pandemic.

Various Frontline Healthcare workers from Tibetan health care centers across India have started to receive the vaccination.

On 18th January 2021, Nine Tibetan Frontline Healthcare workers of Delek Hospital and one from the Department of Health, CTA became the first Tibetan batch to get the first shot of the Covid-19 vaccine at Zonal Hospital, Dharamsala.

Health care workers and front liners of Tibetan health care centers at, Mundgod, Odisha, Bir, and Miao also received the vaccination. A total of 81 Healthcare Frontline workers of Mundgod DTR Hospital, Ganden Jangtse, and Loseling Hospital got their first shot on 20th January 2021 at Pala Primary Health Centre.



Figure 5 Frontline health worker getting COVID19 vaccination first shot at Mungod DTR Hospital.



Figure 6 Gajang and Loseling health workers under observation for 30 min after getting vaccinated



Figure 7 TPHC Miao health workers in queue for COVID-19 vaccine registration



Figure 8 Token for Vaccination

On 21st January 2021, 10 Frontline workers of Miao hospital and 11 health workers of Odisha, Menlha hospital got vaccinated at Miao Community Healthcare Centre and Chandragiri, Community Health Center respectively. Another 11 Frontline Healthcare workers of TPHC Bir received their first shot at Bir Community Health Center on 22nd January 2021.

As per the protocol, all were kept under close observation for 30 minutes after receiving their first shot. Mild side effects were reported from a few recipients which resolved within a few days. Their second dose will be received after 28 days from the first shot.

The Health Department, CTA with Tibetan Settlement Officers were constantly putting in their efforts to make the vaccine available to more number of Tibetans.

The Department of Health, CTA urged every Tibetan to continue masking, Social distancing, hand hygiene to protect self and community. We thank and congratulate the Government of India on this huge initiative to curb the pandemic.

Extreme precautions urged for Tibetans ahead of Tibetan Losar: 44th COVID-19 Briefing



Figure 9 44th COVID-19 Task Force briefing

Dharamshala: In the nationwide vaccine drive that began on 16th December, 152 Tibetan health workers and front line workers have received the first shot of the vaccine. Mundgod, Orissa, Maio, Bir, and Dharamshala were the first key regions where the vaccine was rolled out.

“Despite the availability of vaccines, people should not treat the ongoing pandemic so casually”, advised Health staff Tsering as he appealed for extreme precautions ahead of Tibetan New Year. He urged the Tibetans to keep the gatherings small while endorsing the necessary precautions.

Updating the weekly status of the COVID cases across the Tibetan community in India and Nepal, Dr. Tsamchoe reported 5 new cases and they were from Dekyiling, Dharamshala, Mainpat, Bylakuppe, and Pandoh. Of the total cases, the eldest was 43 and the youngest was 25 yrs old. Symptom-wise, 2 were symptomatic and 3 were asymptomatic.

One case of death was also reported that week. A 69 yr old woman from Pandoh who was reportedly having underlying health issues had died from the infection.

The total number of reported cases of the exile Tibetan community stood at 1495 out of which 1440 recovered, 17 active cases, and 38 deaths.

As for the quarantine status, a total of 362 Tibetans in India and Nepal were in quarantine out of which 224 were home quarantined and 138 were at community quarantine centers.

Till that week, a total of 24841 units of immune boosters had been distributed so far. The mental health committee had tele-counseled 4 patients this week. Mass testing drive conducted across Tibetan settlements in India and Nepal covered 545.

Dr. Tenzin Namdon precautioned against the widespread rumors and fake news on the efficacy of vaccines on social media. She urged the public to only follow the directives issued by the health authorities of respective regions.

Dr. Namdon assured that while serious side effects after the vaccine were rare but a few small side effects in some cases are possible such as minor pain on the area of the shot, swelling, fever, and sneezing, etc. These side effects were said to subside within a day or two.

She further informed that the optimum efficacy of the vaccine will only be seen after the second dose. That being said, there is, however, no guarantee that a person will be completely immune to the virus so additional precautions were highly urged.

45th COVID-19 Briefing: Nationwide vaccine drive covers 196 Tibetan frontline workers



Figure 10 Dr Tsamchoe addresses 45th COVID-briefing. Screenshot image

Dharamshala: On 5th Feb 2021, Addressing the 45th COVID-19 Task-Force briefing, Dr. Tsamchoe updated the pandemic status of the exile Tibetan community, reporting 24 cases that week. They were region-wise: 2 from Clementown, 4 from Dekyiling, 15 from Dharamshala, 1 from Mainpat and 2 from Mundgod, out of which 15 were men and 9 were women, the oldest was aged 96 and the youngest was 16, and

according to symptoms, 15 were asymptomatic and 9 were symptomatic. That week, 3 Tibetans passed away due to complications from diseases, aged between 78 to 83 years old with comorbidities.

That brought the total number of reported cases in the exile Tibetan community to 1519, out of which 1449 had recovered, 41 were dead, and 29 were active cases.

One year since the outbreak of the pandemic, the global COVID-19 tally stood at 103 million, led by the USA with 26 million cases, India trailing behind with 10 million cases and 1.55 lakh active cases.

Dr. Tsamchoe updated the quarantine status for the week which was at 432, of which 253 were in-home quarantine and 179 in institutional quarantine.

SORIG immune boosters had been distributed free of cost to 24,897 people. The mental health committee provided tele-counseling services to 2 COVID-positive patients that week.

Mass COVID-testing drive covered 632 people in India and 5 in Nepal that week.

The nationwide vaccination drive initiated on January 16th in India covered 196 Tibetan healthcare workers till that time.

Dr. Tsamchoe informed that India's vaccination drive covered 44 lakh people, 3 lakh people vaccinated a day, making it one of the most vaccinated countries. Across the US as well as India, the data of people who have shown side-effects were a small number of the total vaccinated population and none of those were severe of nature.

On the occasion of World Cancer Day, she pointed out that cancer is the top cause of non-communicable deaths. Particularly lung and prostate cancer among men; breast and cervical cancer among women. She recommended dietary and behavioral guidance from the Tibetan Sowa Rigpa tradition. She also suggested the need for biannual physical check-ups to assess health.

Dr. Tsundue shared that under the nationwide vaccination drive, 75 healthcare workers out of which 31 were Tibetans who received the 1st round of vaccine at Delek hospital. Similarly, another batch of 38 healthcare workers including 4 Tibetans had received the vaccine so far at the hospital.

He also appealed against the circulation of unverified information via social media and instead urged following official websites like the WHO, GOI's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare(MHFW), and the US Centre for Disease Control for useful information.

He also stressed keeping up with the necessary precautions, particularly during the Losar celebration.

47th Covid-19 briefing urges more Tibetans to participate in vaccine drive

Dharamshala: On 19th February 2021, Addressing the 47th COVID-19 taskforce briefing, Dr. Tsamchoe updated the pandemic status of the exile Tibetan community, reporting 4 cases that week. They were from region-wise: 1 from Clemetown, 1 from Rajpur, and 2 from Mundgod. Among them, the oldest was 73 yr-old and the youngest was 11 yr-old, with symptom-wise, 2 were symptomatic and 2 were asymptomatic. No deceased cases were reported that week. That brought the total cases in the Tibetan

community across India and Nepal at 1530, out of which, 1458 had recovered, 41 deceased cases, and 31 active cases.



Figure 11 47th COVID-19 Task Force Briefing.

As for the quarantine status, 184 Tibetans were in quarantine out of which 148 were home quarantined and 36 in institutional quarantine.

SORIG immune boosters had been distributed free of cost to a total of 25,094 people till then. The mental health committee provided tele-counseling services to 4 covid patients that week.

Mass COVID-testing drive covered 407 Tibetans in India and Nepal that week. According to Dr. Tsamchoe, a total of 226 Tibetans including health care workers had received the vaccine that week. So, a total of around 346 Tibetans had received the shot.

Dr. Tsundue clarified the eligibility criteria of the covid vaccines and informed that those prone to experience an anaphylactic reaction, a form of a severe allergic reaction were advised against getting the shot. Secondly, pregnant and breastfeeding women were advised against receiving shots given the lack of research done in such a situation. Thirdly, recovered patients and patients with comorbidities can opt to receive the shot. Meanwhile, Dr. Tsundue advised caution to those with platelets and coagulation disorder in case they opt for the shot. He also advised those with a high-risk medical condition to first improve immune response before opting for the shot.

That week, around 10 health care workers had received the second dose of the covid vaccine and according to Dr. Tsundue, none of them reported any side effects. He urged more people to come forward to participate in the vaccine drive to curb the spread of the virus.

Despite the dramatic decline of the cases in India, Dr. Tsundue appealed to the public for extreme caution as the emergence of new variants at the time could be a major cause of concern.

48th Covid-19 briefing: New precautions urged amid Covid spurt across India



Figure 12 48th Covid-19 briefing: new precautions urged amid Covid spurt across India. Photo/Screengrab

Dharamshala: With the spurt of Covid-19 infections across India, particularly of new variants, on 25th February 2021, the Covid-19 Taskforce has urged new precautions for the Tibetan community. India's tally of infections, which stands at 11.04 million, swelled in the past 24 hours of the day by 16,738 new cases, according to data released by the Union Health Ministry.

Addressing the 48th COVID-19 Task Force briefing, Dr. Tsamchoe said 10 new cases were reported from the Tibetan community in the past week, with 5 from Mundgod, 2 from Bylakuppe, and 1 each from Mainpat, Pondoh, and Dharamshala. The oldest was aged 90 and the youngest was 15; 6 were asymptomatic while 4 were symptomatic. No deceased cases had been reported.

The total number of reported COVID cases of the exile Tibetan community stood at 1540, of which 1480 had recovered, 41 deceased, and 19 were active cases.

Reviewing CTA's response, she reported the weekly quarantine status sharing that 293 people were in quarantine of which 141 were under home quarantine and 151 under institutional quarantine.

SORIG immune booster provision initiated in March 2020, last year were distributed to the COVID-positive, close contacts, and quarantine residents totaling 26,649 units that week.

The mental health committee reached out to 9 people via tele-counseling and held virtual mental health workshops for frontline workers on Sorig guidance and vaccination-related information.

The mass testing drive covered 810 people from around 15 settlements as of that week.

The vaccination program covered 48 people from Dharamshala and 12 healthcare workers from Mainpat with 406 frontline workers vaccinated at the time.

Under the Home Department's guidance, Settlement Officers had been meeting with the local government authorities and appealing for equal assistance to the Tibetan community, in addition to informing travelers about the COVID- guidelines, overseeing accommodation needs at the quarantine center, and as part of settlement committee review and act on the latest updates and guidelines issued by the Indian government.

The global pandemic tally has crossed 111 million of which 2 million were deceased. The US continues to be the global hotspot with the highest number of cases and the death toll surpassed half a million leading the US government to declare the pandemic the worst health crisis of the century and observe national mourning that week.

49th COVID-19 briefing calls to toughen Covid measures as cases spike in the Tibetan community

Dharamshala: On 4th March 2021, Addressing the 49th COVID-19 Task-Force briefing, Dr. Tsamchoe updated the pandemic status of the exile Tibetan community, reporting 61 new cases that week raising concerns over a surge in the cases once again.

The cases reported that week with region-wise: 55 from Dharamshala, 1 from Bylakuppe, 2 from Bhandara, 1 from Mainpat, 1 from Mundgod, and 1 from Rajpur. The oldest among them was 86 yr old and the youngest was 15 yr old. However, no death was reported that week which brought the total number of cases in the Tibetan community across and India to 1601, out of which, 1485 had recovered, 75 active cases, and 41 deceased cases.

In the past few days of that week, Covid cases in the Tibetan community particularly in Dharamshala reported a spike in numbers due to which an emergency response committee meeting was held chaired by Health Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk to review the measures needed to tackle the rising cases. Likewise, the public was appealed to abide by the norms and regulations prescribed by the administration and the local authority.

Dr. Tsundue addressed the concern of rising cases in institutions like schools and monasteries after the outbreak in Gyuto Monastery.

Dr. Tsundue outlined 5 key points necessary to tackle the challenge posed by the pandemic. Firstly, he recommended strict masking in order to curb the spread of the virus. Secondly, those in the schools and monastic institutions were advised to hold their teachings and gatherings outdoor provided that the safe

distance is maintained. Thirdly, the employees working at the dining facilities of the institutes were strictly advised to wear face coverings and face masks. Fourth, outsiders entering the premises of the institutes were required to quarantine first before engaging with the others, and finally, to avoid the risk of spreading the virus, individuals were needed to consult the doctor even in the cases of mild cold and other symptoms.



Figure 13 49th COVID Taskforce briefing. Photo: Screengrab

To those seeking to get the second jab, Dr. Tsundue urged to refer carefully while reviewing the eligibility form before getting the shot.

Health staff Ngawang Tenzin made a public appeal calling for strict adherence to precautions and guidelines for the then upcoming Tibetan Uprising Day in case public gatherings were held.

As for the quarantine status, Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe said 594 Tibetans were under quarantine out of which 202 were under home quarantine and 392 at the institutional quarantine. The rise in the number of quarantines was largely due to the reopening of schools starting 1st March.

Sorig immune boosters had been distributed to a total of 26934 till that week. The mental health committee provided tele-counseling services to 5 covid patients that week.

Mass COVID-testing drive covered 1805 Tibetans in India.

As per the response committee's data, a total of 413 Tibetans including health care workers had received the vaccine till then. As India commenced the second jab of vaccine drive, on 1st March for senior citizens above 60 years, and people with co-morbidities above 45 years, around 248 Tibetans senior citizens have opted for the shot.

50th COVID-briefing: Strict precautionary measures urged in tandem with vaccine



Figure 14 Additional Secretary Jampa Phuntsok addressing the 50th COVID briefing. photo: Screengrab

Dharamshala: On 11th March 2021 addressing the 50th COVID-19 press briefing, Dr. Tsamchoe updated the COVID-19 status of the exile Tibetan community, reporting 11 new cases that week. They were region-wise: 1 from Rajpur, 4 from Dharamsala, 3 from Mundgod, 1 from Dolanji, and 2 from Shimla. Of which, 9 were male and 2 females; the oldest was aged 89 and youngest was 21; symptoms-wise: 7 asymptomatic and 4 symptomatic with 3 deaths reported that week.

Till that time, the total count of reported COVID-19 cases of the exile Tibetan community stood at 1612, of which 1496 had recovered, 43 deaths, and 73 active cases.

National vaccine drive covered 459 Tibetans that week with a total of 3320 Tibetans vaccinated who fall under the eligibility criteria of 1) age 60 and above and 2) age 45 above with comorbidity issues.

Dr. Tsamchoe explained that COVID-19 vaccines in the market have a high rate of efficacy, however, the second dose must be completed for immunization to work and urged to follow precautions in addition to vaccination.

As primary and secondary schools were to reopen following week, she called for educators and administrators to supervise children in adherence to the COVID guidelines.

Additional Secretary Jampa Phuntsok, Health Department, CTA thanked the Indian government for facilitating vaccination for the Tibetan community on behalf of the department and expressed hope that provision for Delek hospital as a vaccine center for Dharamsala resident Tibetans. He also applauded the efforts of the Settlement Officers, Directors of branch healthcare centers, and volunteers in registering the eligible Tibetans for vaccination and appealed to the public to continue following precautionary measures alongside vaccination, till the pandemic no longer poses as a health emergency.

Dr. Tsundue shared that 6870 people had received the first dose of COVID-vaccine at Kangra adding that 20 people with the co-morbid conditions listed by the government, showed no adverse reactions to the vaccine.

He also clarified that vaccines are not fail-safe individually and must be boosted by precautionary measures.

Dr. Tsundue demonstrated the process to register for vaccines via Arogya Setu mobile app to dispel confusion among users.

The quarantine status this week reports 578 people at quarantine, of which 273 are home quarantined and 205 at institutional quarantine.

The mental health committee provided counseling services to 9 COVID-positive patients during that week and also organized a virtual workshop on mental health guidance from the SORIG perspective facilitated by an expert.

Mass testing drive covered 1562 Tibetans that week.

51st Covid-19 briefing: 13 new cases this week, 2 deaths

Dharamsala: On 18th March 2021, Addressing the 51st COVID-19 Task-Force press briefing, Dr. Tsamchoe updated the pandemic status of the exile Tibetan community, reporting 13 new cases. The new cases reported were region-wise: 3 from Bylakuppe, 5 from Clementtown, 1 from Ladakh, 1 from Miao, 2 from Mundgod, and 1 from Shimla. The oldest among them was 81 years old and the youngest was 24 yrs old.

Two deaths were reported from Bylakuppe this week related to covid-19. One 83 year old and another 81 years old succumbed to the infection that week. That brought the total number of cases in the Tibetan community across India and Nepal to 1625, out of which, 1549 had recovered, 31 active cases, and 45 deaths.

As per the response committee's data, a total of 681 Tibetans including health care workers and volunteers had participated in the phase 1 vaccine drive. As for the second phase of covid vaccine, 6607 elderlies including those above 60 years and, and people with co-morbidities above 45 years have received the shot bringing the total vaccinated number to 7281 Tibetans in India.

As for the quarantine status, Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe said 262 Tibetans are in quarantine out of which 146 are home quarantined and 116 at the institutional quarantine.

Sorig immune boosters had been distributed to a total of 7856 people who were under quarantine. In addition to that, Sorig medicines have been distributed to a total of 9816 people above 65 yrs of age, 1481



Figure 15 Dr Tsering Tsamchoe (L) and Nyima Gyaltzen (Dept. of Health) addressing the 51st covid-19 briefing. Photo: Screengrab

frontliners, 4667 people with comorbidities, and around 3731 Tibetans settled abroad. In total 27551 Sorig boosters have been distributed till that time.

The mental health committee provided tele-counseling services to 2 covid patients that week. The committee also continued the workshop on mental health for the Settlement officers, volunteers, and health care workers.

Mass COVID-testing drive covered 719 Tibetans in India that week.

Nyima Gyaltsen from the Department of Health appealed to the public to strictly abide by the vaccine eligibility guidelines proposed by the GOI as he addressed cases of some ineligible people in the community barging in the line during the COVID-19 vaccine and preventing the eligible ones from getting the timely shot. Explaining the details for vaccine registration, Mr. Gyaltsen added that those eligible for the vaccine are required to fill-up the form from a registered medical practitioner, and the form must be submitted along with a copy of ID proof during the vaccination. As for the distribution and cost of the vaccines, he clarified that both government and private hospitals are administering the distribution while the government hospitals are distributing the vaccines free of cost, the private health facilities are charging Rs 250 which may differ in different states.

Addressing the surging cases in India during those weeks, Health staff Gyaltsen insisted those eligible for the vaccine to take part in the vaccine drive without a doubt and appealed to people against the negligence of wearing face masks.

52nd COVID-briefing: Task force cautions public against new daily spike and fresh waves of COVID across India



Figure 16 Deputy Secretary Tenzin Kunsang at 52nd Tenzin Kunsang

Dharamsala: On 25th March 2021, Addressing the 52nd COVID-19 briefing, Dr. Tsamchoe updated the weekly COVID-status of the exile Tibetan community, reporting 66 new cases. The oldest among them

was 85 and the youngest was 6 years old, symptoms wise: 29 were symptomatic and 37 were asymptomatic.

The total reported cases of COVID-19 of the exile Tibetan community stood at 1691, of which 1565 had recovered, while 79 were active cases and 47 deaths, including 2 elderlies suffering from comorbidities died that week.

Dr. Tsundue briefed on new mutations and the three types of Covid strains reported in India, cautioning for safety amidst the renewed surge of cases.

He reported that so far testing of students ahead of school reopening has not revealed any positive cases.

Dr. Tsundue also told that Delek hospital was making provisions for a free vaccination to elderlies aged 60 and above, and directed people to register for the vaccine ahead of getting it.

Health Department's Deputy Secretary Kunsang issued an advisory directing those eligible to register for COVID-19 vaccination via the Arogya Setu app as per the GOI's 3rd phase of vaccination which began from 1st April and in case of difficulty, asked to seek the help of healthcare workers or settlement office.

She also advised those who disregard positive COVID-diagnosis in asymptomatic cases to accept scientific evidence. She further said that neglecting proper medical care could cause chronic lung problems in the long run. Similarly, strict precautions were urged at the vaccine centers which were potentially risky as many people arrive at these sites.

Dr. Tsamchoe urged the public not to panic regarding vaccine accessibility as provisions were being made to cover everyone and further informed people to follow the proper gap of 4-8 weeks between the two doses for efficacy. She also emphasized the need for sustained precautionary measures as key to prevention.

As per the weekly quarantine status, a total of 291 Tibetans were under quarantine, of which 212 were under home quarantine and 79 were under institutional quarantine in that week.

Sorig Immune boosters totaling 28,066 units had been distributed so far.

The mental health committee provided counseling services to 1 individual in that week.

The mass testing initiative had covered 1155 Tibetans.

Likewise, the vaccination drive had covered 7661 Tibetans including frontline workers, elderlies, and those with comorbidities.

The global pandemic tally stood at 123 million cases, with the US leading with 29 million cases, followed by Brazil with 12 million cases and India crossing 11 million cases as per the latest data that week. In India, cases were mounting across the states of Punjab, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Karnataka. In particular, Himachal Pradesh witnessed a fresh wave of cases compelling state and district authorities to accordingly issue new guidelines.

53rd COVID-19 Briefing: Delek Hospital now authorised as a vaccine center



Figure 17 53rd COVID-19 Task Force briefing. Photo/Screengrab

Dharamsala: On 1st April 2021, Addressing the 53rd COVID-19 Taskforce briefing, Dr. Tenzin Tsundue informed that Delek Hospital had then been authorized as a vaccination center in Dharamshala and further informed that the upcoming vaccine session at the hospital will be held on 1, 5, 7, and 9 April.

He added that those above 60 years will be administered free of cost while those above 45 years to 60 years will have to pay Rs 150 per dose fee for administration cost.

Addressing the concerns and doubts among people stirred by the Covid vaccine, Dr. Tsundue said the vaccine is safe and effective adding that beneficiaries can opt to get the vaccine at different centers as well as change the dates of their inoculation schedule. As for those suffering from hypertension and diabetes, Dr. Tsundue advised them to take the shot without hesitation.

In addition, the Covid vaccine recipients were urged to stick to only one brand of vaccine meaning individuals were advised to get both doses of vaccination from the same brand and not otherwise. In the case of India, vaccine recipients can only opt for either Covishield or Covaxin.

On 2nd April 2021, As the central government, on that day announced the nationwide vaccine for people above 45 yrs and above, chances of virus transmission may be quite high at the vaccine centers thus Dr. Tsundue appealed to the public to maintain the strict protocol of social distancing along with face masking.

As for the pandemic status of the exile Tibetan community, 29 new cases were reported that week as per the data of the CTA's COVID-19 response committee. Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe reported that among the new cases, 14 were symptomatic and 15 were asymptomatic. The oldest among them was 89 years and the youngest was 17 years. No case of death was reported that week.

That brought the total number of cases in the Tibetan community across India and Nepal to 1720, out of which, 1576 recovered, 97 active cases, and 47 deaths.

In that week, 532 Tibetans were quarantined, of which, 210 were home quarantined and 322 were under institutional quarantine. The distribution of SORIG immune boosters till that week stood at 28387 units.

The mental health committee provided tele-counseling services to 13 covid patients. The committee also provided a virtual workshop on mental health to the front liners in Nepal. The mass testing drive covered 1000 Tibetans in India.

Updating the status of the vaccination drive in the Tibetan community, Dr. Tsamchoe reported, since January, as the vaccine drive began, a total of 940 front liners have participated in the phase 1 vaccine drive.

As for the second phase, a total of 7631 people above 60 and those above 45 years with illness received the vaccine. That brought the total vaccinated number in the Tibetan community to 8571.

Warning against the resurgence of cases, Dr. Tsamchoe cautioned the public against negligence in tackling the covid and urged them to strictly adhere to Covid guidelines. India recorded a sudden spike in the numbers in a short period. More than 30,000 new cases were recorded in a single day last week.

Additional Secretary Jampa Phuntsok, Department of Health delivered a public appeal to stringently abide by the precautionary measures as the virus rebounds in India.

He commended the active participation of the Tibetan community in the vaccine drive and recommended extended precautions post-vaccination.

As India rolls out a nationwide vaccine drive for the above 45 years, Delek hospital has already begun the vaccine administration. Additional Secretary Jampa Phuntsok informed that fee concession would be provided to the destitute Tibetans and urged the eligible recipients to join the vaccine drive.

54th COVID-19 Briefing: Strict precautions urged ahead of final Tibetan elections

Dharamsala: On 8th April 2021, Updating the Covid-status of the exile Tibetan community, Dr. Tsamchoe reported 37 new cases of which the eldest was 84 and youngest was 18. Genderwise 15 were male and 22 were female while 24 were symptomatic and 14 were asymptomatic cases. As of that week, an 84-year-old elderly with comorbidity succumbed to Covid.

That brought the total cases of exile Tibetan community to 1757 cases, of which 1628 recovered, 48 deaths, and 81 active cases.



Figure 18 Joint Secretary Tsering Youdon of Health addressing the 54th Covid-19 briefing. Screengrab image

Globally, the pandemic tally stood at 132 million cases in around 223 countries with the US and Brazil leading at 30 million and 13 million cases each. While in India, cases continued to multiply at a piercing rate, crossing 1,15,000 per day. However, the recovery and mortality rate had been stable at 91% and 1.28% respectively.

In light of recent evidence revealing a higher rate of symptomatic cases among the age group of 15-40 with a higher mortality rate in those above 60, Joint Secretary Tsering Youdon urged for utmost consideration of elderly people's health safety.

Across India, we saw around 1,15,000 cases a day. The situation was getting ever more critical and hence sustained precautions were paramount, she said.

She applauded the dedication and efforts of the settlement prevention committee that has been in progress since last year and urged them for sustained efforts. She also assured continued support from the headquarters and welcomed feedback and suggestions from the public concerning public healthcare.

Meanwhile, she clarified the three types of quarantine norms; those who have traveled to other states, positive patients, and contacts, all must adhere to the quarantine guidelines which is the most effective way of containment.

Ahead of the final round of Tibetan general elections, she urged everybody to follow the basic precautions as even vaccination does not entirely cover full immunity.

Dr. Tsamchoe updated the weekly quarantine status reporting that 208 people were under quarantine, of which 137 were under home quarantine and 71 under institutional quarantine. Thus far, 28,491 Sorig immune boosters had been distributed. Under mass testing, 1033 Tibetans had been covered.

The vaccination drive has covered a total of 12,140 Tibetans under the successive phases of vaccination as per data submitted to the Health Department. The mental health section provided tele-counseling services to 5 positive patients that week.

Dr. Tsamchoe also highlighted World Health Day's 2021 campaign on 7 April calling for equal and fair access to health without discrimination to refer to the fact that investment in basic healthcare must be made a priority and similarly the importance of mental healthcare amidst the pandemic.

Dr. Tsundue cautioned against the general perception that young people are less vulnerable, ringing the warning bells on the new mutations which were highly infectious and fatal to all.

As states including Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu had reported the highest tally in Covid, he warned that another wave could break out in the Tibetan settlements concentrated in these states and similarly in UP and Punjab in north India where night curfew has been imposed.

55th Covid briefing prohibits flouting Covid protocols amid huge spike in cases

Dharamshala: On 15th April 2021, As India records an alarming surge in Covid cases in the past few days with a crossover of 2 lakhs cases, Deputy Secretary Nyima Gyaltsen, Health Department appealed to people to adopt strict precautionary and Covid appropriate measures while also urging those eligible to certainly get vaccinated.

"Until we do not see a significant drop in the cases, absolutely do not lower your guard. Cooperate and participate in the fight against the pandemic", urged Deputy Secretary Gyaltsen.

As schools reopened and classes resumed, the schools' administrations were advised to adopt SOP guidelines based on the directives issued by the Ministry of Health, India. Likewise, the school authorities were urged to strictly implement quarantine to students who had tested positive and those who were potential contacts.

Reporting on the pandemic status of the exile Tibetan community, Dr. Tsamchoe said 80 new cases were recorded that week as per the data of the CTA's COVID-19 task force. Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe reported that among the new cases, the oldest was 84 years and the youngest was a 1-year-old infant. No case of death was reported that week.

That brought the total number of cases in the Tibetan community across India and Nepal to 1837 out of which, 1648 recovered, 141 active cases, and 48 deaths. Updating the status of the vaccination drive in

the Tibetan community, Dr. Tsamchoe reported 1215 frontliners, 8356 people above 60 with comorbidities, and 3452 above 45 years bringing the total vaccinated number in the Tibetan community to 13,707.



Figure 19 Deputy Secretary Nyima Gyaltzen, Department of Health. Photo/Screengrab

In that week, 232 Tibetans were currently quarantined out of which, 151 were home quarantined and 81 were under the institutional quarantine. The distribution of SORIG immune boosters till that week stood at 28,770. The mental health committee provided tele-counseling services to 7 covid patients. The mass testing drive covered 753 Tibetans in India and Nepal.

Alarming the daily spike in the cases, Dr. Tsamchoe prohibited throwing caution to the wind and breaking the Covid protocols.

Dr. Tsundue spoke on the gravity of the pandemic situation in India stating India as the second-worst hit country in the world surpassing Brazil.

Warning against the emergence of new variants, he reported that a different form of symptoms accompanies the new strains which include red eye, rashes, discomfort in the throat, and skin discoloration around lips, fingertips, etc.

The new variants emergence in India is causing a severe situation especially in the hospitals as many hospitals in India ran out of ventilators and hospital beds.

In view of severity, Dr. Tsundue convinced people to get vaccinated if eligible stating the low risk of contracting the virus.

In the case of those opting for the second dose, he said the individual must register the same phone number with which they registered for the initial vaccine to avoid dubiety. Secondly, individuals were strictly advised to follow up on only one brand of vaccine that was initially used.

In conclusion, Dr. Tsundue demonstrated the ways to register on the [Cowin portal](#). Once registered, the portal offers options on vaccine registration, selection of vaccine center of convenience, booking of the slot to get the vaccine, and also reschedule option for the vaccination date.

How to weather India's deadly second wave of Covid-19: CTA Task Force briefing



Figure 20 Secretary Palden Dhondup, Department of Health, CTA during the Covid briefing. Photo/Screengrab

Dharamshala: In the throes of a deadly second wave of infections, India experienced its worst surge in Covid since the pandemic struck with a staggering 3,14,835 cases in the last 24 hours, on 22nd April 2021. The second wave which turned out to be much deadlier than the first, resulting in more rapid viral progression than seen earlier is, as health supervisors and doctors argue, fuelled by people letting their guards down and flouting the Covid precautions.

“The situation is grim, to say the least, all across India,” remarked Secretary Palden Dhondup, Department of Health, CTA. The fatality rate had been inching up in states like Karnataka, Delhi, Kerala, Chattisgarh, UP, MP, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Rajasthan.

Particularly in Tibetan inhabited areas such as Dharamshala, Varanasi, Dehradun, Hunsur, and Orissa to some extent, a spiraling of cases were reported, with places like the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) in Varanasi facing a critical shortage of doctors and nurses.

Speaking at the 55th Covid task force briefing, Secretary Palden Dhondup made an impassioned appeal to doctors and nurses across India to come forward and volunteer their services at the premier Tibetan university which was the worst affected Tibetan clusters.

Since the Wuhan-originated pandemic began, the Tibetan community in India, Nepal, and Bhutan had confirmed 2097 cases (those reported to DoHe) and over 50 deaths. That week alone 260 cases (131 M: 129 F) were reported with the youngest being 2 years old and the eldest 90. Overall, 355 active cases.

“Taking a long-term view of this pandemic, it cannot be stressed enough that hospitals and governments alone cannot win the fight over this fast-moving pathogen. It is up to each individual to do its part,” Secretary noted.

[Lancet's report released last week](#) confirmed the aerosol transmission of Covid-19, dismissing the odds of surface transmission to some extent while ratifying the fastened rate of transmissibility and lethality of India's new variants in the second wave.

Assessing the pool of cases recorded that week, both Dr. Tenzin Tsundue and Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe observed there were higher infections in the younger population from age 20-40, and among them, more rapid progression of symptoms and the spread than seen earlier.

“The only way that this spread would sputter to a halt is if everyone was persuaded to stay put in their cities, avoid any kind of long-distance travel, properly mask-up at all times and vaccinate themselves or get registered starting 28 April in the case of those above 18,” said Dr. Tsundue.

Introducing its third inoculation phase since the drive that began in January, the Indian government had expanded its vaccination program to include all adults over the age of 18 starting 1 May. For those eligible, the [Covwin](#) platform was ready for 18+ beneficiaries by 24 April, however, the registrations to book appointments (starting 1 May) began only from 28 April 2021.

“As a society, it is critical that we brace up and take all necessary precautions. Wear masks properly to ensure full coverage and double-mask if possible, wash hands frequently and avoid crowds,” said Dr. Tsamchoe, adding that everyone eligible should immediately get vaccinated.

She further noted the promising results of allopathic and SORIG integration in treating Covid patients and likewise, appealed to all the patients to take both the medicines as administered.

Dr. Tsundue also recommended taking a 1-minute breath count and use of pulse oximeter to monitor oxygen saturation for early detection as well as daily monitoring in patients. A rate of over 24 breaths in a minute indicates a severe condition in which immediate medical help should be sought.

Collective responsibility and efforts the only way forward to fight deadly 2nd wave



Dharamshala: The turnover of 3 lakh new cases and increasing fatalities in India just in the last 24 hours of 29th April 2021, speaks the gravity of the situation in the country. The sudden rise in cases indefinitely lead to the shrinking of the health care resources in India with people taking social media for oxygen beds and other resources.

The deadly second wave widely left India's health care systems overwhelmed with resources being overstretched. Shortly after the first wave, instead of adhering strictly to the covid safety precautions, people have taken a more relaxed approach which fueled the tsunami of new cases in the second wave. Addressing the 57th covid briefing, Deputy Secretary of Health Department, Tsering made a fervent appeal to the people to stay put and restrict unnecessary traveling especially those living in the worst-hit covid states including Delhi, Karnataka, U.P, and Tamil Nadu, etc. He cautioned them to abide by the lockdown norms imposed by the respective state governments.

As spiraling cases were also reported from the Tibetan communities inhabited in these states, the Central Tibetan Administration had consecutively alerted people to prohibit gatherings of any sort.

Unlike the first coronavirus wave, the second wave was found to have much more drastic effects given the unprecedented speed of transmission. Also, the second wave was said to be predominantly transmitted through the air as per the conclusions of the assessment by [Lancet](#), thus, double masking and gloves usage was found to provide extra barriers against the new variants.

"It's only common that everybody in some way is affected by the pandemic stress and those infected are psychologically the most affected ones, however, it is highly advisable not to panic as most of the cases are treatable at home through certain care measures", he added while emphatically urging people not to let the guards down.

The monasteries and institutions were especially cautioned and they were advised to avail isolation rooms for unforeseen situations. Also, given the efficacy and safety of the vaccines, Tibetans were urged to get the vaccines in order to bring the normality back.

As the cases in India were skyrocketing recording a new global high for cases each day, the Tibetan communities were no safer against the deadly pathogen. 352 Tibetans were tested positive that week alone according to the report of [the CTA Covid-19 Response Committee](#). The oldest among them was 86 and the youngest was a 1-year-old infant. Unfortunately, 3 died that week succumbing to the virus. Overall active cases of the Tibetan communities in India and Nepal now stood at 677.

Addressing the increasing cases and rapid progression of symptoms, Dr. Tsamchoe observed utmost precaution in the daily activities while strictly adhering to the covid safety norms. Dispersing the myth related to the covid vaccine, Dr. Tsamchoe emphasized the importance of getting vaccinated.

15,457 Tibetans so far have been vaccinated. Those required to get the second shot were urged not to delay given the scarcity of the vaccines reported in some states.

She also enumerated the benefits of SORIG immune boosters and announced that non-Tibetan patients can also avail themselves of free SORIG immune boosters.

"The administration and committee were working around the clock to provide needed support and aid but we alone cannot win this battle without your cooperation", said Dr. Tsamchoe urging the public to unite their strength and potential.

As the new variant was found to be more transmissible affecting the higher proportion of the younger population, the Central government had announced the onset of registration for 18 and above eligible. And joining the desperate appeal of health practitioners, Dr. Namdon requested people to get the covid jab as soon as possible stating the large benefits of the vaccine in conquering the rising cases.

She also alerted people against the spreading of false claims and myths about vaccines.

Phase 2/3 clinical trials for Covaxin to begin on children from 2 to 18



Figure 21 59th Covid-19 Taskforce Briefing. Photo: Screengrab

Dharamshala: On 13th May 2020, Addressing the 59th Covid Taskforce Briefing, Tenzin Kunsang, Deputy Secretary of Health Department once again raised the awareness on the ferocity of the second wave that had been sweeping across India at a deadlier and faster pace while she made an earnest appeal to the people to strictly adhere the covid-safety norms instructed by the establishments.

Those experiencing any signs and symptoms or even a little discomfort were urged not to delay in getting themselves tested regardless of vaccination status.

“Only collective efforts can bring forth positive results in overcoming the devastating virus”, assured Deputy Secretary Tenzin Kunsang. Meanwhile, she lauded individuals and organizations for their contributions.

As for the weekly covid-status of the exile Tibetan community, Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe reported 443 new cases and 22 deaths. With this, the total number of reported cases of the exile Tibetan community was 3377, 2119 recoveries, 83 deaths, and 1175 active cases.

Dr. Tenzin Tsundue explained that India’s covid strain had been designated by scientists across the world as the most transmissible variant till that time calling it a variant of concern. He said that the current swell in cases was due to the rise in B1.617 virus which was said to be an airborne infection, and thus people were advised to keep physical distancing of at least 6 feet in addition to proper masking in both indoor and outdoor spaces.

“As much as it has become a strenuous battle to fight the mutant virus, the myth and stigma surrounding the virus have made it even harder”, said Dr. Tsundue as he shunned the myths related to covid- testing and urged people to get tested in time.

As covid cases in India were recording a new surge daily, doctors and experts nationwide had urged people to take active participation in the vaccine drive citing the uncertainty of the mutating virus.

Amongst the surging cases in India, many fresh cases were recorded of youth and children and now experts believe that children and newborns were at risk in the possible third Covid-19 wave as they were yet to be inoculated against the Covid-19 infection. Keeping this in view, earlier today, the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) approved the Phase 2/3 clinical trials for Covaxin to be conducted on the children from 2 to 18 years after much evaluation and careful thoughts.

Since the inception of the nationwide vaccine drive that began in March, a total of 16222 Tibetans had received their doses. More Tibetans were advised to come forward to get the jab citing the necessity in preventing the spread of the virus.

60th Covid–19 Briefing: 3 months waiting period mandatory for Covid patients to get vaccinated



Figure 22 (From L) Dr Tsering Tsamchoe, Additional Sec. Jampa Phuntsok and Dr Tenzin Namdon at the 60th Covid task force briefing. Photo/Screengrab

Dharamshala: Continued precautions were urged at the 60th Covid briefing on 20th April 2021. Additional Secretary, Jampa Phuntsok of the Health Department appealed to the public especially the ones inoculated to continue taking all the necessary precautions and not throw caution to the wind citing that no vaccinated individual is completely immune to contracting the covid infection.

Similarly, those recovered from infection were specifically advised not to let their guard down as cases of reinfectd have been reported if not many. Even though the virus provides some extent of immunity the first time a person is infected, however, it may not prevent the person from getting the infection for the second time. Moreover, the recovered person can still be a carrier and be high–risk to others.

“Until we have not completely eradicated covid virus, we must continue to adhere by the covid safety measures”, added Additional Secretary Jampa Phuntsok.

In addition, he urged the Tibetans to come forward and get themselves tested in case of feeling unwell or experiencing mild to moderate symptoms.

“Our efforts should be mobilized to end the pandemic and completely eradicate the virus”, said Additional Sec. Jampa Phuntsok and meanwhile alerted people against covid stigma.

While India embraces nationwide lockdown in a bit to contain the spiraling cases through nationwide lockdown, the frontliners were however working overtime fighting the battle against Covid-19 just to ensure the safety of the people while putting their own lives at risk.

In that light, he offered a special tribute to the frontline warriors for their selfless determination and sacrifices in this time of crisis. He also commended the valuable services prompted by individuals and organizations to the needy.

As for the weekly covid-status of the exile Tibetan community, Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe updated that the mass testing drive this week covered 2453 Tibetans in India and Nepal. Of those tested, Dr. Tsamchoe reported 636 new cases and 18 deaths. With this, the total number of reported cases of the exile Tibetan community was 4013, 2388 recoveries, 101 deaths, and 1524 active cases.

Since the inception of the nationwide vaccination drive in India, around 16699 Tibetans had been vaccinated and more Tibetans if eligible were appealed to get themselves tested.

Addressing the vaccination-related information, Dr. Tenzin Namdon said the covid patients must wait for 3 months after recovery to get their jabs as per the new advisory of the Health Ministry. The waiting period of 3 months was also recommended to those patients who had received their first shot and those patients who have received antibody treatment or plasma therapy.

In addition, individuals willing to make a blood donation and those opting to get other vaccines were also advised to wait for a 2–3 weeks gap after vaccination before proceeding to make donations. Similarly, concerns regarding vaccination to lactating women and whether the said vaccine will impact the health of women have been debated many times and finally, pregnant and lactating women can now avail the vaccine during ante-natal checkups.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering reviews Covid-19 situation and preparedness

Dharamshala: Sikyong Penpa Tsering moved swiftly on Thursday, his first day in administration on 27th May 2021, taking a comprehensive review of the Covid-19 situation in the Tibetan communities in India and Nepal through a meeting with the CTA Covid-19 Task-Force.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering had said in his inaugural address that tackling the Covid-19 pandemic in Tibetan Communities in India and Nepal would remain one of his top priorities on assuming the office.

On Friday, Sikyong paid a visit to the three quarantine facilities in Dharamshala: Covid Care Center at Nelenkhang, Upper TCV, and the Covid-care center in McLeod Ganj which was jointly managed by the Settlement Office and Tibetan Youth Congress to boost the morale of the frontline workers.

He later presided over the inauguration of Delek hospital's new ambulance and flagged off its maiden ride.

As of 27th May 2021, the Tibetan community in India and Nepal reported 4385 cases, 2942 recoveries, 114 deaths, and 1329 active cases.



Figure 23 Sikyong Penpa Tsering takes stock of the Covid-19 situation in Tibetan communities in India and Nepal at a Covid-19 taskforce meeting with Health Secretary Palden Dhondup, Kashag Secretary Tseggyal Chukya Dranyi, Director of Reception Centre (now turned

Addressing the 61st Covid briefing, Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe reported 372 new cases that week (M: 210 and F: 162), with the youngest being a 1-year-old baby and the eldest was aged 94). Unfortunately, the mortality count has risen to 13 that week.

The mental health committee had provided tele-counseling to 103 Covid-patients that week. Mass testing had covered 2086 Tibetans that week across India and Nepal. The vaccination drive had covered 17,409 Tibetans including 1333 frontline workers, 1874 comorbidities, 7790 elderlies above 60, 5532 above 45, and 880 above 18.

Dr. Tsamchoe appealed to the public to continue to follow the precautionary measures. She likewise urged the public to register for vaccination and help those digitally illiterate to do so. Dr. Tenzin Tsundue encouraged people to come forward to test at the slightest appearance of symptoms without fear or stigma. He added that doing so would enable faster recovery if tested positive for Covid-19. For those

recovering from Covid-19, he advised a 3-month waiting period to get the first vaccination as advised by the Health Ministry, Government of India.



Figure 24 Sikyong interacts with residents at the quarantine centre. Photo/Tenzin Phende/CTA

Sikyong Penpa Tsering issues new guidelines on tackling Covid-19

Dharamshala: Sikyong Penpa Tsering on 29th May 2021, detailed the 16th Kashag's new Covid-19 guidelines that focused on achieving full vaccine coverage for Tibetan communities in India and Nepal, prioritizing medical care and equipment supplies for those battling with Covid-19, and providing relief for the needy and those impacted by the pandemic.

He also announced a revamp of the CTA Covid-19 Emergency Task Force and its roles. The revised committee includes A) Two advisory members: personal physicians to His Holiness the Dalai Lama Dr. Tsetan Dorji Sadutshang, Delek Hospital, and Dr. Tsewang Tandin, Men-Tsee-Khang.

B) Chair of the task force: Secretary Palden Dhondup, Department of Health and members: Secretary Jigme Namgyal, Department of Education, Mentseekhang Director Tashi Tsering, Delek Hospital Director Dawa Phunkyi, Health Deputy Secretary Tenzin Kunsang, Mentsee Khang Dr. Rinzin Sangmo, and Dr. Tenzin Tsundue, Delek Hospital.

Henceforth, the task force headed by Secretary Palden Dhondup, Department of Health, would act as the central authority in leading CTA's Covid-19 responses and issue directives to settlement offices, departments, health centers, and other relevant offices in this new capacity.

As for the local Covid-19 emergency task force in settlements, Sikyong mandated that the committee must include two doctors, each from traditional Tibetan Sorig medicine and allopathy medicine, The 16th Kashag's guideline and policy on Covid-19 focus on the three key agendas:



Figure 25 Sikyong Penpa Tsering issues new guidelines on tackling Covid-19, 29 May 2021. Photo/TTV

1. All-round efforts to achieve full immunization coverage among the Tibetan communities in India and Nepal: Towards this end, the CTA Covid-19 Emergency Task Force shall explore all possibilities to purchase and procure vaccines, whether from private corporates or states, and direct the distributions accordingly. Similarly, all Settlement offices and regional health centers were advised to leverage the available resources to bolster the immunization efforts fully. The guideline also requires settlement offices/local task force to set up necessary help-desks to facilitate vaccine registration for those who have no means to access phones/internet or are digitally illiterate.
2. Medical care and equipment supplies for those battling with Covid-19 to ensure their full and swift recovery: From quality medical care to adequate equipment supplies, the CTA task force would provide all necessary care and supplies to meet a 100 percent recovery rate. Every minute care will be given so that no patient suffers from a shortage of medical supplies such as ventilators, oxygen cylinders, concentrators, and other essentials.
3. Relief and assistance for those impacted by Covid-19: As instructed, the Secretaries of the Home department and Education department shall dispense the necessary relief assistance for those impacted by the pandemic. In addition, the Home department shall furnish complete data of

those affected by Covid-19 and updated data of the vaccinated and non-vaccinated to implement necessary response measures.

In addition to these guidelines, it was also mandated for all settlement offices to assign one Covid response coordinator who would report daily Covid updates and relevant information to the CTA task force.

Meanwhile, Sikyong Penpa Tsering shared the outlines of funds received and spent on Covid-19 relief in the Tibetan community in India and Nepal.

Since the pandemic struck, around 656.15 lakh rupees were spent on Covid relief efforts in India from the total relief fund of 915.79 lakh of which, 259.64 lakh rupees was the remaining balance.

Similarly, around 172.74 lakhs were spent on Covid-19 relief in Nepal with total of 225.52 lakh rupees received and a balance of 52.78 lakhs. As of 28 May 2021, Sikyong announced the sources as PRM, USAID, UNHCR, AHP, TRAS, Swiss, Tibet Relief fund among several others.

Overall, 828.89 lakhs had been spent on Covid-19 relief and containment efforts in India and Nepal out of the total 1141.31 lakh rupees. The balance remains 312.42 lakh rupees.

If the situation doesn't improve, the expected expenditure for the next 10 months was likely to be around 1095 lakhs rupees.

As of Saturday, 29 May, the total number of cases in India and Nepal stood at 4445 with 2983 recoveries, 114 death, and 1348 active cases.

Covid-19 Task Force Chair issues new measures to protect children against 3rd wave

Dharamshala: Following Kashag's revamp of the CTA Covid-19 Emergency Task Force on 29th May 2021, its Chair Palden Dhondup, Secretary of the Health Department, on 4th June 2021 briefed on the positivity rates in the first two waves and preparedness for the probable occurrence of the third wave. He also issued new measures and guidelines as follows:

1. As per the Department of Health's estimate, the timeline for the first wave of Covid-19 in the Tibetan community in India and Nepal is as such: May 2020 to February 2021 as the first wave, taking into account the first case reported in May. In this timeline of 1st wave, the Tibetan community reported 1566 cases and 40 deaths constituting a monthly average of 156 cases and 4 deaths.

Similarly, In the second wave, i.e., March-May 2021, 2453 cases and 82 deaths were reported with a monthly average of 817 cases and 26-17 casualties. As of Thursday, 102 patients were admitted at Tibetan Health centers under the health department.

2. After due deliberations at the Covid-19 Task Force meeting convened on 2nd June, led by the Health Department, it was decided that Health Department will entirely bear the cost of treating mild and asymptomatic cases effectively from 1 June.

3. In the phase-wise vaccination drive, currently targeting the 18-44 age group, the Health Department as per Sikyong's direction, is making arrangements to procure vaccines from the state government as vaccine accessibility has become increasingly hard across the country.

4. In preparedness for the third wave which experts predict to be more dangerous for the children, the department shall dispense Sorig immune boosters to the priority group of 4-17 and those unvaccinated in the age group of 18-44. Most schools have been covered under this initiative, including TCV except Ladakh and Bylakuppe. The drive will soon cover Mussoorie Homes and branch and Sambhota schools. So far, the Sorig immune boosters had been distributed to 35,000 beneficiaries.

5. The public is appealed to hold Saka Dawa prayers remotely from homes, instead of holding prayer assemblies in violation of COVID-norms.

6. Settlement Offices are directed to enforce strict adherence to lockdown and ensure no gathering takes place.



Figure 26 Chair of CTA Covid-19 Emergency Task Force Secretary Palden Dhondup. Screengrab image

Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe updated the COVID-status of the exile Tibetan community, which reported 296 cases this week (189:M and 107:F) with the oldest aged 66 and youngest aged 2. Unfortunately, 8 people succumbed to the disease this week.

Dr. Tsamchoe appealed for sustained precautionary measures cautioning about the rising toll in India and highlighted the importance of mental health and post-COVID care in attaining complete recovery. Likewise, she advised physical exercise and limiting the amount of screentime usage during the lockdown. Dr. Tenzin Namdon clarified that long-COVID syndrome continued to affect many especially elders and advised seeking consultation with doctors for post-Covid symptoms and stressed on a good diet and adequate exercise for recovered individuals.

Here's an overview of the Covid-19 management and testing efforts: A total of 603 were currently under home quarantine and 456 were admitted at institutional quarantine. 35,798 Sorig-immune boosters had been dispensed free of cost. 114 patients that week had received Mental health counseling. Mass testing had covered 1409 Tibetans that week across India and Nepal. The vaccination drive had covered 17,770 Tibetans as of Thursday, 3 June 2021.

Settlement and school-wise vaccination data collection under way: Task force Chair Palden Dhondup

Dharamshala: Sikyong Penpa Tsering reviewed the progress of the vaccination drive across 36 Tibetan Settlements, and the implementation of the priority guidelines/measures to curb the Covid-19 pandemic, at the Covid-19 task force meeting on 8th June 2021.

Since assuming office, Sikyong had prioritized CTA's COVID-response by revamping the COVID-taskforce and launched key strategies to tackle COVID in the first week of his inauguration.

Chair of the Covid-19 Emergency Task Force, Palden Dhondup, Secretary of the Health Department reiterated the 3 key agendas of the new Kashag to combat the pandemic: 1) To vaccinate the general public, 2) procure medical supplies and equipment for the hospitals and clinics run by the Health Department, 3) dispense rations to the destitute affected during the lockdown under the Home department's purview.

So far, in accordance with the phase-wise vaccination drive by the Government of India, eligible elderlies above 60, those above 45 with comorbidities, those in the 45-60 age group without comorbidities, had attained near full vaccine coverage by that time.

Calling the vaccination drive a key priority, the Taskforce chair extended his deep appreciation to the heads of religious institutions, NGOs, associations, and private individuals who had come forward to donate vaccines and medical equipment across settlements in Mundgod, Hunsur, Kollegal, covering 20-30% of the exile Tibetan population.



Figure 27 From left: Taskforce Chair Health Secretary Palden Dhondup, Kashag Secretary Tseggyal Chukya Dranyi, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, Delek hospital Director Dawa Phunkyi and Mentseekhang Director Tsering Dhondup. Photo/Tenzin Phende/CTA

He briefed on the efforts to procure vaccines which were underway led by the personal physician of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, and committee advisory member Dr. Tsetan Dorji Sadutshang of Delek Hospital assisted by Dr. Tenzin Tsundue both of whom were in charge of overseeing the technical aspects of vaccine procurement.

In preparedness for the oncoming third wave, Chair Palden Dhondup said the task force had prioritized the most vulnerable, i.e., the age groups of 4-17 and those unvaccinated from the 18-45 age group to receive Sorig immune boosters as per the guidance of Sorig experts.

Except for TCV Bylakuppe and TCV Ladakh, most schools had been covered under the initiative, he added. Caretakers and educators at boarding schools had been directed to ensure that kids take the medicines on time.

An overview of the vaccination data furnished by 36 settlements and various schools as of 7th June 2021 were:

1. Lobling school in Nepal: fully vaccinated, 2 administered 1st dose, and 3 unvaccinated.
2. Songtsen boarding school: 30 fully vaccinated, 30 administered 1st dose, and 23 unvaccinated.
3. Namgyal school in Nepal: 126 unvaccinated, 14 administered the 1st dose, and 13 fully vaccinated.
4. 9 schools under the Sambhota administration have furnished data, the rest is pending.
5. Except for Upper TCV, the vaccination data from TCV branch schools: Pending
6. Mussourie Home's School: pending.

Vaccination data received by the Health Department from 36 settlements reveal, other than a hand few, most settlements reported full coverage.



Figure 28 Advisory members: personal physicians to His Holiness the Dalai Lama Dr Tsetan Dorji Sadutshang, Delek Hospital and Tsewang Tandin, Men Tsee Khang join the meeting virtually. Photo/Tenzin Phende/CTA

The tally: first dose administered: 21,474; pending: 9,440; fully vaccinated: 8,061, unvaccinated: 14,761. Few ineligible due to health circumstances for vaccination such as lactating women and pre-existing health conditions had prevented settlements from acquiring full coverage status.

By the end of that week, pending data of the unvaccinated populous from settlements were expected to be compiled and processed. He stressed that public cooperation plays a huge role as it impacted the data compilation efforts.

In order to boost the progress, Sikyong had scheduled to hold a virtual meeting with Settlement Officers from the south, the central, and the northeast through Monday afternoon.

Few ineligible due to health circumstances for vaccination such as lactating women and preexisting health conditions had prevented settlements from acquiring full vaccine coverage status.

By the end of that week, pending data of the unvaccinated populous from settlements were expected to be compiled and processed. He stressed that public cooperation plays a huge role as it impacts the data compilation efforts.



Figure 29 The taskforce briefing in progress. Also present: Secretary of International Relations Karma Choeying, Dr Tenzin Tsundue, Delek Hospital, Men Tsee Khang doctor Rinzin Sangmo. Photo/Tenzin Phende/CTA

CTA Covid-19 Task Force thank Individuals and NGOs for massively contributing in combating Covid-19 in Tibetan community

Dharamshala: On 10th June 2021, Remarking on the significant contributions made by NGOs and individuals since the advent of the covid-19 pandemic, Chair Palden Dhondup of the Task Force Committee who is also the Secretary of Health Department said that they deserve all appreciation, and more for their humanitarian support and services prompted amid the crisis.

To acknowledge and honor the contribution of various NGOs and individuals, Secretary Palden announced that CTA will award a certificate of appreciation to all those who have been doing their part in mitigating the impacts of the pandemic.

While there had been many organizations and individuals in the Tibetan community who played crucial roles and whose funding had helped in combating the covid crisis, the list of only a few submitted to the committee among which were 13 of such individuals and organizations from Hunsur settlement who were acknowledged and lauded for their contributions. Secretary Palden also mentioned the donation announced by Sera Jey Thangsa Gomo Tulku Rinpoche amounting to Rs 113 lakhs to the Health Department. He noted that the donation received will be diligently and effectively used as desired by Rinpoche who had requested to allot 50% of the funding to local hospitals across various Tibetan settlements while the remaining amount be used by CTA to procure PPEs and other resources.

As for the weekly covid-status of the exile Tibetan community, Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe updated that the mass testing drive that week covered 2332 Tibetans in India and Nepal. Of those tested individuals, Dr. Tsamchoe reported 121 new cases and 2 deaths. With this, the total number of reported cases of the exile Tibetan community was 4802, 4139 recoveries, 124 deaths, and 639 active cases.

As India reported 6,148 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking the total toll to 3,59,676 in addition to 94,052 fresh cases, the central government had begun speeding up the second dose of vaccine drive, especially among the priority groups. State governments and UT have been directed to prepare for the same while the government was keeping up with the phase 3 trial for Covaxin.

In addition to using the donation in combatting the pandemic crisis in the Tibetan settlements, the 113 lakhs INR contributed by Rinpoche as conveyed by him is to commemorate the 113 years His Holiness the Dalai Lama has assured to live.



Figure 30 L-R: Chair of Task Force Committee Mr Palden Dhondup (Sec of Health Dept.), Dr Tsamchoe, and Dr Tenzin Tsundue.

Meanwhile, in order to bring down the fresh cases, people were appealed for increased compliance with covid measures. Likewise, Dr. Tsamchoe suggested the intake of more food items that boost immunity such as fresh vegetables and fruits, plenty of water, and yogurt, etc. She advised extra precautions during

that period of seasonal changes and with the advent of monsoon season, it may bring forth seasonal flu which in effect can enhance the spread of the virus as per the studies of the researchers.

Dr. Tenzin Tsundue advised those in quarantine and home isolation to monitor and record the SpO2 level thrice a day to ensure it remains above 94. In case if it is below 94 percent, hospital admission may be required on the advice of the doctor. He recommended proning position for covid patients to help them breathe easier.

In cases of fever and pain, Dr. Tsundue advised not to consume any medicine other than Paracetamol as it remains the first choice of doctor's prescription.

Addressing the report related to the outbreak of black fungus (mucormycosis) cases in India, Dr. Tsundue informed that it is a rare fungal infection that seems to be affecting only 3% of the recovered and recovering covid patients. At present, only Maharashtra and Gujarat have reported the maximum cases of mucormycosis. Patients with excess diabetes and a weak immune system were said to be more prone to this fungal infection, thus, people were urged to be cautious yet not overly worried.

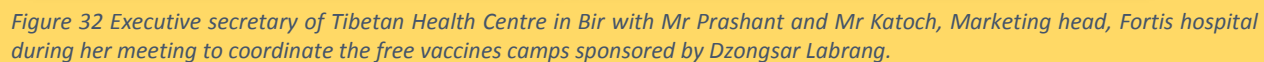
Dr. Tsundue also provided clarification and answered queries received from the people on the following key issues:

1. Covid patients should get themselves vaccinated after 3 months of recovery.
2. Due to a lack of data, pregnant women in India are not eligible for the vaccine as per the government's policy
3. Lactating women are eligible for the vaccine as per the changes in the protocol amended.
4. Fully vaccinated individuals still have to maintain social distancing and wear a mask to avoid further complications.
5. People with a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to any component of the COVID-19 vaccine or injectable (intramuscular or intravenous) medication should NOT receive the vaccine.
6. People treated with monoclonal antibodies must wait for 3 months before getting themselves vaccinated.
7. In severe cases, covid patients were advised to wait for 1-month post-recovery to get themselves vaccinated.
8. Vaccination is to be deferred 3 months after recovery from Covid given the evolving situation of the pandemic, emerging scientific evidence, and experience from across the globe as recommended by the Health Ministry.
9. The second dose of the vaccine must be the same brand used in the first dose.
10. People who opted for the first dose of Covishield are recommended to wait 3-4 months before the second dose while 28-42 days were recommended for Covaxin.
11. Lack of side effects post-vaccination is common. The immunity against the virus is either way established after vaccination.

Tracking mass vaccination drive across Tibetan settlements in India and Nepal: 13,429 fully vaccinated

Dharamshala: On June 12th, 2021, CTA Covid-19 Emergency Taskforce Chair Palden Dhondup, also the Secretary of Health Department, updated the progress of the mass vaccination drive across Tibetan settlements in India and Nepal. From 6-8 June, Sikyong Penpa Tsering presided over a series of virtual meetings with Settlement Officers of 41 Tibetan settlements, reviewing the status of mass vaccination drive across these settlements.

Since the COVID-19 vaccination drive took off in India, 13,429 Tibetans in India had received the recommended two doses of Covid 19 vaccine procured through respective state government centers as per the data received from the settlements.



That included frontline workers and Tibetans above the age of 44 years. Central Tibetan Administration through the settlement offices and Tibetan health centers had actively facilitated the community in availing the vaccines. As of 10th June, 26451 Tibetans had received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine which also includes those above 18 years of age who received their first dose. With the acute shortage of vaccines being reported across India, especially for those between the age group of 18-44, the Central Tibetan Administration continued to reach out to various stakeholders involved and mobilized resources to ensure vaccination of the remaining population.



Figure 33 Delek Hospital administers free Covishield vaccine for Tibetans aged above 45, lactating mothers and frontline health workers in Dharamshala. Photo/Voice of Tibet

Highlighting the importance of collective effort in the vaccination drive, Chair Palden Dhondup extended his gratitude to the numerous monastic organizations, NGOs, private individuals who had sponsored the vaccination drive in their respective regions, schools, and monasteries.

The Dzongsar Khyentse Chokyi Lodro Institute and Siddhartha's Intent (India) have sponsored free vaccination camps for all the Tibetan residents, schools, and monasteries in Bir and Chauntra. The Executive secretary of Bir primary health center of the Tibetan health center reached out to the Fortis hospital to coordinate the procurement of the vaccines for the free camp.

Similarly, the monastic organizations in Hunsur have funded the vaccination of their respective monks. The general public received their vaccines under the Indian government's phase-wise vaccine drive, facilitated by Phendhe hospital. Furthermore, 131 non-vaccinated Tibetans in the settlement received their vaccines through the gracious sponsorship of Lelung Tulku.

Chair Palden also mentioned the donation announced by Sera Jey Thangsa Gomo Tulku Rinpoche amounting to Rs 113 lakhs to the Health Department. He noted that the donation received will be diligently and effectively used as desired by Rinpoche, who had requested to allot 50% of the funding to

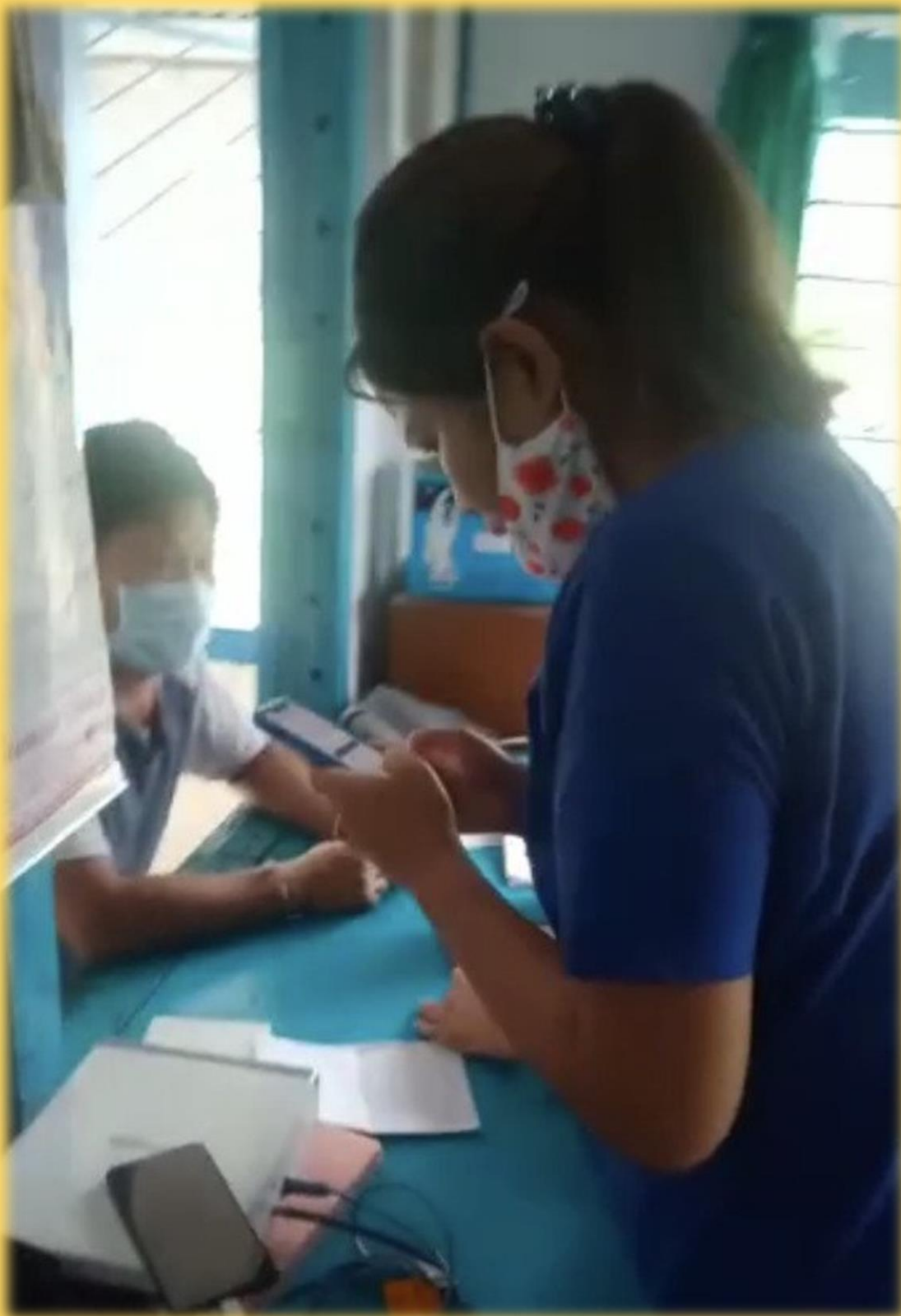


Figure 34 Tezu settlement: Nurses helping Tibetans above 18 with online registration for Covid vaccination.

local hospitals across various Tibetan settlements while the remaining amount to be employed for procuring PPEs and other resources by the CTA.

In Dharamsala, through the collaborative efforts of the Department of Health, Delek hospital, and Settlement Office were able to procure 100 vaccines for those in the special category- aged above 45, lactating women, teachers- from the CMO.

Delek hospital was committed to vaccinating around 8000 non-vaccinated people, as proposed in the previous task force meeting. The drive was underway, with full immunization coverage expected in a few months.



Figure 35 Mr. Thupten Tsering, Chief Representative Officer, Bangalore offering traditional white scarf to the head of administration of Sera-Jey and Sera-Mey monasteries for sponsoring Covid-19 vaccination to Tibetan students in Bangalore and Mysore.

Due to the state government's provision of free vaccines, the majority of those above the age of 60 have received full vaccination against COVID-19 except for those who couldn't get the vaccine due to medical or personal reasons. Those between the age group of 45-59 in the Tibetan settlements across India have also received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. From far northeastern settlements of Tenzinghang Miao, Tezu, Shillong, Darjeeling, etc to Bhandara, Odisha in Central, Paonta, Dehradun, Bir, and others across northern and southern India, CTA's Settlement Offices and healthcare workers had been actively engaged. From procurement of vaccines from the local government centers to coordinating data collection, helping with registration and administration of the vaccine, the Tibetan frontline workers had been dedicating all available resources and assistance to ensure full vaccine coverage for the Tibetan Tezu settlement: Nurses helping Tibetans above 18 with online registration for Covid vaccination.

The vaccination drive at Ladakh-Leh and Jangthang Area by the Tibetan Primary Health Center Ladakh in coordination with the UT government had administered 2597 Tibetans and 840 Locals with the first dose and the second dose to 1283 Tibetans and 166 Locals in Leh and Jangthang area. Despite the COVID-19 vaccine shortage among the age group of 18-44 in India, the Tibetan primary health center staff in Ladakh had been successful in mass vaccination of the first dose of vaccine to 799 people in the age group.

Under the purview of the South-zone Chief Representative Office, Bylakuppe-based Sera Mey and Sera Jey monasteries had sponsored the vaccination of Tibetan college students in Bangalore and Mysore under the vaccine rollout from Apollo hospital.

335 people between ages 18-44 had received the first dose and four people above age 45 totaling 339 people on 9 June at the Tibetan Youth Hostel Bangalore. In addition, the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education students and Men Tsee Khang staff brought the total number to 577 people who received the first dose. The initiative was a testament to the successful facilitation by the Chief Representative Office, TCV staff, volunteers and nurses, Dalai Lama College staff, and Regional Tibetan Youth Congress. Under the generous funding of Sera Mey and facilitation by the Settlement Officer, 56 students in Mysore and 30 students in Mangalore received their first dose.

A total of 5439 Tibetans aged 18-44 of Lugsam and Dekyi Larsoe Tibetan settlements in Bylakuppe received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, as reported by the respective settlement offices. Namdroling, Tashi Lhunpo, and the respective monasteries sponsored the vaccination, in addition to the funding from the Lugsam Co-operative Society.

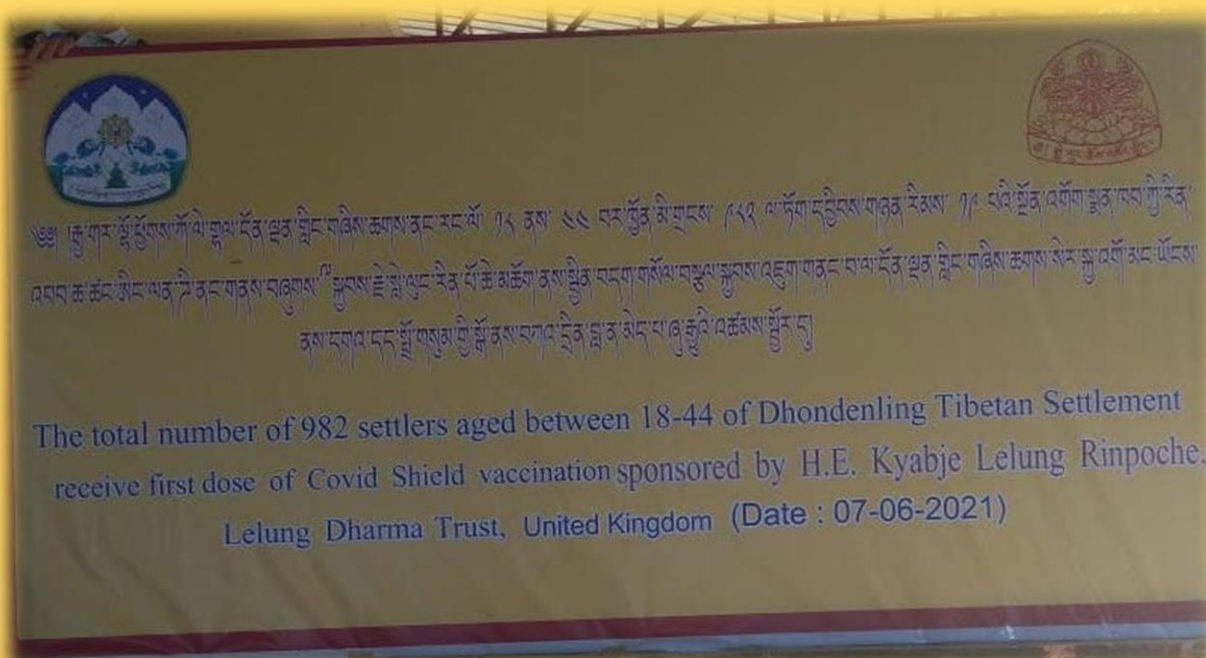
Meanwhile, the entire settlement in Mainpat received both doses of the Covid vaccine except for 45 people who refused to vaccinate. Those between the 18-44 age group had received the 1st dose. Similarly, Sambhota staff at Paonta over the age of 18 have been vaccinated.

Delhi Settlement Office and branch health clinic vaccinated Tibetan students in coordination with a local NGO.



Figure 36 Delhi Settlement Office and branch health clinic vaccinated Tibetan students in coordination with a local NGO.

Delhi Settlement Office and branch health clinic in coordination with local Tibetan supporter, Vikas Dagar had vaccinated 110 stranded Tibetan students and residents at Palwal regional hospital and Gurdwara in Haryana with most of the beneficiaries being students.



In Dehradun, Kyabgon Sakya Gongma Trichen Rinpoche had graciously sponsored the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine for all the Tibetans in the region.



Figure 37 Sera Mey Dratsang Cultural Society and Sera Jey Monastic University, Bylakuppe sponsors free vaccination for students of Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education.

Kyabje Lelung Rinpoche graciously sponsors vaccination for Tibetans in Kollegal settlement. Under the auspices of Kyabje Lelung Rinpoche, a free vaccination drive covered 982 Tibetans aged 18-44 in Dhondeling Kollegal Tibetan settlement.

As for the Tibetans in Odisha, the vaccination was funded by the Rigon Thupten Mindroling Monastery. The vaccination drive in Nepal had been lagging in comparison to the progress in India. In order to step up the vaccination process, Settlement Officers, local task force and hospital Directors had been directed to leverage the available resources, seek assistance from local authorities, monastic organizations, NGOs, and others to vaccinate as many Tibetans as feasible.

In this regard, Sikyong had appealed to the Governments of India and Japan, and the US for assistance, and accordingly, the vaccination drive was expected to progress soon.

Watch the [full briefing by CTA Covid-19 Task Force here](#).



Figure 38 Vaccination drive in Tenzingang Tibetan settlement.

Sera Mey Dratsang Cultural Society and Sera Jey Monastic University, Bylakuppe sponsors free vaccination for students of Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education.

Vaccination drive in Tenzingang Tibetan settlement.

Nurses of Tibetan health center facilitating the vaccination of local Tibetans.



Figure 39 Nurses of Tibetan health centre facilitating the vaccination of local Tibetans.

Vaccination drive in Tibetan settlements progresses as 21,370 in India, 1084 in Nepal get first dose

Dharamsala: As of 17th June 2021, Around 21,370 Tibetans in India and 1084 in Nepal had received at least one Covid-19 shot as the population inches closer to reaching herd immunity.

The pace of the vaccination drive in Tibetan settlements had accelerated over those weeks due to the tireless efforts of settlement offices, Tibetan health care centers under the Health dept, and the overwhelming support and sponsorship by Tibetan monastic institutes, philanthropic individuals, and NGOs.



Figure 40 Additional Secretary Jampa Phuntsok, Dept of Health and Dr Tsering Tsamchoe, CCTM address the weekly Covid-19 Task Force briefing. Photo/Screengrab

In the briefing by the Covid-19 Task Force, Additional Secretary Jampa Phuntsok, Department of Health, and Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe, CCTM reported new progress in the vaccination drive currently underway in full vigor.

Almost 39.87 percent of the adult population in Tibetan settlements in India had received at least one dose, and 26.30 percent of the 18-and-over group, which was 14,096, was fully vaccinated.

Meanwhile, in Nepal, 353 Tibetans (5.18 percent) were fully inoculated and 1084 adults, which makes 15.92 percent, had received the first shot. Around 15,311 (28.57 percent) in India and 5374 (over 78 percent) were counted as unvaccinated.

While the vaccination effort of such a magnitude was unprecedented, the progress so far had been more than encouraging and indicative of effective executive implementations and social responsibility from every corner of society noted Additional Sec Jampa Phuntsok.

He particularly appreciated Mentsee Khang for its production and timely distribution of Sorig immune boosters, in collaboration with the CTA, which had been crucial in bolstering the fight against Covid-19.

Over 36,000 Tibetans had received the Sorig immune boosters and benefited immensely in terms of health rejuvenation.

The Task Force reported 149 new infections as of that week – 54 female, 94 male with oldest being 96 and youngest aged 1 – which brought the total to 4953, with 4339 recoveries, 126 deaths, including two new deaths. The active case stood at 488.

Over 1717 Tibetans and Indians in Doon and Sirmour vaccinated in drive sponsored by Sakya Dolma Phodrang



Figure 41 Sakya Dagmo Kalden with Dehradun Settlement Officer, (Retd) Lt Col Norbu and frontliners.



Figure 42 Sakya Dagmo Kalden, Settlement Officer (Retd) Lt Col Norbu with the frontliners.



Figure 43 Mass vaccination drive underway for local Indians.

Dehradun: Around 1717 people, including 1018 Tibetans in the 18-44 age group across Dehradun and Distt Sirmour and 699 local Indians of the community, received the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine in a mass inoculation drive sponsored by Sakya Dolma Phodrang.

The drive was held from 15 – 19 June, covering Tibetans in Dekyiling, Gepheling, Tsering Dhodenling, Dhondupling, Rajpur, Mussorie, Kham Lingtsang, Raptenling, Tibetan Homes School in Gori Marfi, Distt Sirmour, Herbertpur, and local Indians residing around these settlements.

“It is Kyabgon Sakya Trichen Rinpoche’s sincere wish to see all the members of our community vaccinated at the earliest possible so that they could all be safe and healthy,” said Dagmo Kalden Kushok via a Facebook post.

“The successful drive was a result of many people and the coordination of many departments, mainly the Dekyiling Settlement Office and the Dekyiling Health Center. Kungo (Col.) Tsering Norbu la and the medical staff had truly been indispensable and dedicated throughout the process.”

As a part of the policy commitment to inoculate the entire Tibetan population in India and Nepal, Sikyong Penpa Tsering on 8 June directed all the settlement offices to expedite the vaccination drive in the respective settlements.

Accordingly, the Tibetan settlement office in Dehradun, led by its Settlement Officer (Retd) Lt Col Norbu, approached the Offices of District Magistrate and CMO (Chief Medical Officer) to discuss vaccine roll out and other assistance required in the Tibetan settlements across Dehradun and Distt Sirmour (H.P). Both the DM and CMO assured their full support.

On 14 June, a virtual meeting was held between Sakya Dagmo Kalden and Dekyiling's Covid-19 Task Force Committee to discuss vaccines' procurement. It was then decided that a medical team of Synergy Hospital in Dehradun would administer the vaccines.

As of 21 June, around 1717 Tibetans and Indians had received their first jab against Covid.

Sera Mey Thoetsam Norling and Sera Jey KheNyen Dratsang sponsor vaccination drive for 18-44 aged Tibetans and Himalayan people



Figure 44 Vaccination drive for 18-44 age group Tibetans and Himalayan people in Bylakuppe



Figure 45 Monks of Sera Jey Monastery in Bylakuppe receive first jab against covid

Bylakuppe: India announced “free vaccines” from 21 June for 18-44 age group people, however, in order to inoculate the Tibetan community as quickly as possible, philanthropic individuals and monastic institutions have stepped forward.

Monasteries in Bylakuppe namely Sera Mey Thoesam Norling, and Sera Jey KheNyen Dratsang monasteries have graciously sponsored the mass inoculation drive for 18-44 age group Tibetans and Himalayan people in Bylakuppe.

On 21 June, around 200 Tibetans and Himalayan origin locals in the settlement had received their first jab against Covid and it was administered by a medical team from Apollo Hospital in Mysore. In addition, around 136 monks of Sera Jey monastery also received the first jab which brought the total vaccinated number of the drive to 336.

As of 21 June, under the sponsorship of Namdroling Monastery, Sera Mey, Sera Jey and Tashi Lhunpo monasteries, the entire Tibetan population of age group 18-44 in Bylakuppe settlement had successfully received the first jab against Covid.

Tibetan volunteer nurses deployed in schools and settlements across India to help fight COVID-19



Figure 46 Tibetan volunteer nurses with Secretary Palden Dhondup, Department of Health, CTA.

Dharamshala: Even though India was amid recovering from the severity of the second wave, the country was already facing the dread of a possible third wave, however, Deputy Secretary Tenzin Kunsang of the Health Department assured that preparations had begun in the Tibetan community to tackle the third wave which according to studies was predicted to be much more lethal.

Under the guidance of the CTA Health Department, the Tibetan Nurses Association NYNJ, and the Tibetan Association of Northern California Health Committee had organized the Covid-19 medical mission to India to help the Tibetan community recover from the pandemic.

12 healthcare workers including 7 frontline health care workers from the US and 5 across India had volunteered to assist and provide their services as the Tibetan community had been in preparation to fight against the probable upcoming wave.

The mission was funded by the Tibetan Nurses Association, Tibetan Association of Northern California, Tibet Fund, and Arizona Friends of Tibet.

As per the requirement, the volunteer nurses had been deployed to various schools and settlements scattered across India, including Sarah College, TCV Gopalpur, TCV Upper, Mentsee Khang, and Dekyiling Tibetan settlement.

Tibetan volunteer nurses with Secretary Palden Dhondup, Department of Health, CTA.

“We cannot thank enough the invaluable dedication and sacrifices of these frontline heroes”, asserted Deputy Secretary of Health Dept.

She further assured that the Task Force had held several meetings with the settlement officers, schools heads, and heads of the monasteries to chalk out strategies to prevent possible third wave if it was to approach sooner than expected.

As for the weekly Covid-status of the Tibetan community, Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe updated that the mass testing drive that week covered 1644 Tibetans in India and Nepal. Of those tested individuals, Dr. Tsamchoe reported 133 new cases and 5 deaths.

With that, the total number of reported cases of the exile Tibetan community was 5084, 4530 recoveries, 131 deaths, and 423 active cases.

Meanwhile, inoculation drive in the Tibetan community gradually progresses as around 14596 Tibetans i.e 26.76% of the Tibetan population in India was fully vaccinated while around 25854 Tibetans i.e 47.40% of the population received at least one Covid-19 shot bringing the vaccination tally of Tibetans in India to 73% of the total population.

Deputy Secretary Kunsang commended the near successful inoculation of the first dose in the Tibetan community with 70% of the Tibetan population inoculated with at least one shot and meanwhile credited the achievement to the philanthropic contributions of individuals, organizations, and monasteries who massively contributed and funded the resources.

Similarly in Nepal, 432 Tibetans had been fully vaccinated while 1327 had received at least one shot brought the total vaccination tally to 17% of the total population.

Recently, a few cases of the [Delta Plus](#) variant of coronavirus were detected in a few states in India which had been labeled as a ‘variant of concern’ by experts.

Addressing that worrying concern around the new variant, Dr. Tsundue explained that the new Delta Plus variant was quite similar to the variant responsible for the deadly second wave such that this new variant of novel coronavirus will have increased transmissibility.

“The only way to decelerate the spread of this new variant is to get oneself tested after the appearance of first symptoms even if it’s mild”.

As many parts of India begin to impose lockdown relaxation, the public is advised to continue to practice appropriate safety measures and mindful conduct for the greater good and meanwhile more people especially adult individuals were urged to participate in the ongoing mass inoculation drive so as to secure herd immunity against the covid.

Administrative News

Deputy Speaker addresses the 17th Founding Anniversary of Central Council of Tibetan Medicine



Figure 47 The chief guest Health Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk, special guest Deputy Speaker Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok, alongside Council members at the 17th Founding Anniversary of the Central Council of Tibetan Medicine (CCTM). Photo/TPIE

Dharamsala: The Central Council of Tibetan Medicine (CCTM) marked its 17th Founding Anniversary with the inauguration of the council's office on 5th Jan 2021. The Chief Guest at the program, Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk of the Department of Health (DoHe), inaugurated the new office of the council at the Department of Health (Central Tibetan Administration), Gangchen Kyishong.

The special guest at the program, Deputy Speaker Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, virtually launched a book on Tibetan medicine compiled by the CCTM. In his address, the Deputy Speaker greeted the guests present there on behalf of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and spoke on Tibetan medicine which has been a major Tibetan science of studies for centuries. With the blessing of His Holiness the great 14th Dalai Lama, Men-Tsee-Khang (Tibetan Medical and Astro. Institute) was one of the institutes that follows the rich tradition of the Sowa Rigpa or Tibetan medical system to be established

first in exile almost sixty years ago. Followed by the establishment of Chagpori Tibetan Medical Institute, Central University for Higher Tibetan Studies (CUTS), Solan Menriling Tibetan Medical Institute, The



Figure 48 Health Kalon inaugurates the office of the Council at the Department of Health, also joined by Council Chairperson Dr Tsering Tsamchoe.

Central Institute of Buddhist Studies in Ladakh, and the addition of the Sowa Rigpa course in

Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in Gangtok recently. Tibetan medical practitioners have also increased with the establishment of aforesaid institutes of Tibetan medicine in India and across the world.

To standardize the Tibetan medical system, an Act for the Central Council of Tibetan Medicine (previously known as 'Tibetan Doctors' Association') was passed by the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, then called Assembly of the Tibetan People's Deputies, in 2003. It has been 18 years since the passage of the Act for the CCTM and 17 years after the establishment of the CCTM. In these periods, the council had also seen downfalls that led to extensive debates and discussions on its continuation in the Parliament, followed by the formation of two consecutive committees. Deputy Speaker Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok who was one of the members of the second committee formed by the Parliament recalled his working experience with the other two committee members; Parliamentarian Karma Yeshe, and late Dr. Pema Dorjee. The second

committee had worked extensively for six months and classified a series of questions to Health Kalon,



Figure 49 Deputy Speaker delivers his address.

Men-Tse-Khang Director, and others on the continuity of the council and presented a report on the same

to the 15th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. The report proposed some small rectification on the frame of the council and asked for financial support from Kashag through the Department of Finance. Since then, the council has had many members for the past 6 years since 2015. The rules and regulations of the council were also approved and passed by the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile which need to be abiding by all the CTA offices, individuals, or originations.

The success of the CCTM must be credited to the combined effort of all the members of the council. The council needs to work as per the objective of the passed rules and regulations of the committees. The Deputy Speaker further added that he has been serving at the council as an advisor for the past many years at their request which enabled him to be well-informed of the working of the council. Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile attended the 6th conference of the CCTM in Delhi and delegations of the Standing Committee of the Tibetan Parliament have also attended numerous council meetings. All the requirements and facilities were provided, starting from the passing of the Act in the Parliament to taking its responsibility by the Kashag, and followed by consecutive conferences. In the first conference, there was a large number of participants which decreased significantly in the following conferences. In 2019, the Deputy Speaker attended the 6th conference organized by the CCTM held in Delhi as an advisor which had very few participants, therefore he advised the council on the need for serious observation as there are more than 500 registered (Doctors). He further advised on safeguarding the council so that it will not have to seek help from the Kashag and the Parliament again.

Under the Central Council of Tibetan Medicine, there are private as well as public organizations that should utilize the rich tradition of Sowa Rigpa for the benefit of people rather than merely serving the interest of earning profit or for competition. The uniqueness of the Tibetan medicine system requires inner purity, devotion, respect, and trust from the patients to completely eradicate the ailment. Unlike modern medication which helps only in providing temporary relief from the ailment. Similarly, the Deputy Speaker advised the Tibetan medical practitioners to publish articles to expose the misuse of Sowa Rigpa by the Chinese Communist Party and approach the Indian leaders.

While Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk lauded the newly inaugurated office of CCTM and reaffirmed Kashag and especially DoHe's support for the Sowa Rigpa. DoHe, CTA has facilitated the CCTM with the best office space and advised for the collective contribution in the functioning of the CCTM. He further spoke on the importance of following His Holiness the Dalai Lama's advice on the council's functioning.

The 17th Founding Anniversary of the Central Council of Tibetan Medicine was also attended by Parliamentarian Dawa Phunkyi, Chief Administrator of the Tibetan Delek Hospital; DoHe Secretary Palden Dhondup; DoHe Add'l Secretary Jampa Phuntsok; Director Tsering Tashi of Men-Tse-Khang; and other guests. The 17th Founding Anniversary of the CCTM concluded with a thank you note by Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe, the Chairperson of the CCTM.

Tibetans from Austria and Switzerland donate towards COVID-19 vaccinations of Tibetans in India



Figure 50 Members of the Tibetan Community in Austria with President Dr. Sangay and Representative Chhimey Rigzen. File Photo Tibet Bureau Geneva

Geneva: In the face of unprecedented challenges of combating the Wuhan originated COVID-19 pandemic, members of the Tibetan Community in Austria and the Tibetans from the Horgen Section of Switzerland initiated a financial contribution towards the arrangement of COVID-19 vaccine for the Tibetans in India.

Joining the efforts of the Central Tibetan Administration's preparation for arranging COVID-19 vaccine as and when the vaccine gets ready, the Tibetan Community in Austria contributed a sum of EURO 3,298 (Three Thousand two Hundred and Ninety-Eight) to the Department of Health, Central Tibetan Administration. Similarly, Mr. Bokong Choekyi from Tibetan Community in the Horgen section in Switzerland donated CHF 1000 towards facilitating the COVID-19 Vaccine for Tibetans in India.

Compared to comprehensive responsibilities undertaken by the Department of Health, CTA, including the COVID-19 vaccine arrangement, the contribution amount is relatively small. However, members of the Tibetan community of Austria had taken this initiative to morally support the department in this challenging pandemic situation, said the President of the Tibetan Community-Austria, Mr. Tsering Namgyal.

Representative Chimey Rigzen of the Tibet Bureau Geneva commended the initiative and kind gestures of contributing towards the COVID-19 vaccination drive for Tibetans in India.

On World Cancer Day, Health Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk calls for healthy lifestyle practices to keep cancer at bay



Figure 51 Health Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk and Chief Medical Officer of Kangra inaugurates 'I am and I will' World Cancer Day signature campaign organised by Tibetan Cancer Society at McLeod square, Dharamshala, 4 February 2021. Photo/Tenzin Phende/CTA

Dharamshala: ‘Cancer is gradually becoming, if not prevalent, but a concerning health issue in the Tibetan community in India and Nepal,’ Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk, Department of Health, CTA said on World Cancer Day, 4 February 2021.

Speaking at a Cancer awareness signature campaign organized by the Tibetan Cancer Society, Kalon emphasized the importance of a healthy lifestyle and green diet in curbing the risk of cancer.

‘The key to fighting cancer is adopting healthy lifestyle practices such as healthy nutrition, meals that are plant-predominant, and keeping physically active. It only takes a bit of mindfulness of what you eat and whether or not your daily lifestyle habits are inclined towards healthier or unhealthy choices. Your quality of life can prevent the disease or make you more susceptible to it.’

Kalon added, “On the occasion of World Cancer Day, I strongly urge the Tibetan community to be more mindful of their dietary and lifestyle choices and remind them that one of the leading causes of cancer is an unhealthy lifestyle.”



Figure 52 Health Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk addressing media on World Cancer Day. Photo/Screengrab

He also commended the Tibetan Cancer Society for their relentless efforts towards cancer awareness. Together with the Chief Medical Officer of Kangra, Health Kalon inaugurated the signature campaign themed as ‘I Am and I Will’. MP and Delek Hospital Chief Administrator Dawa Phunkyi and presidents of various NGOs attended as well. While the Tibetan community is not predisposed to cancer but generally, certain cancers like stomach cancer, lung cancer, and liver cancer have been seen to be common causes of morbidity as well as mortality in the Tibetan community of India and Nepal.



Figure 53 Health Kalon, Chief Medical Officer and MP and Delek Hospital Director Dawa Phunki at the signature campaign.
Photo/Tenzin Phende/CTA



Figure 54 Tsultrim Dorjee, Director of Tibetan Cancer Society and staff with the dignitaries at the signature campaign.
Photo/Tenzin Phende/CTA

According to the health department, around 27 Tibetans had died of cancer in 2019, and 62 are currently receiving cancer treatment under the coverage of the Tibetan Medicare System.

World Cancer Day is observed globally to spread awareness about cancer and the stigma associated with the disease. Many events are organized every year, people are urged to take action, and funds are raised to help those suffering from cancer.

The theme for World Cancer Day 2021 was 'I Am and I Will.' It is a multi-year campaign that began in 2019 and this year marks the last year. The theme represents an empowering call-to-action urging personal commitment, it also represents the power of action taken now to have a positive impact on the future. The theme focuses on "together with all our actions matter".

Health Kalon meets District Chief Medical Officer and his team



Figure 55 Health Kalon meets Chief Medical Officer of Kangra District Dr. Gurdarshan Gupta, 5 February 2021. Photo/Tenzin Jigme/CTA

Dharamshala: Health Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk of the Central Tibetan Administration accompanied by Deputy Secretary, Mrs. Tenzin Kunsang and Under Secretary, Mrs. Tenzin Dolkar met with the Chief Medical Officer of Kangra District Dr. Gurdarshan Gupta, District Health Officer Dr. Katoch, and District TB Officer Dr. R K Sood on Friday, 5 February.



Figure 56 Kalon presents a token of gratitude to the CMO and his team. Photo/Tenzin Jigme/CTA

The purpose of the meeting was to request the CMO and the team to facilitate COVID-19 vaccination to the senior officials of CTA and the frontline health workers of the department in the ongoing vaccination drive of the Government of India. The CMO and the team gave assurance of the best possible cooperation and facilitation under the guidelines of the Govt of India.

Health Kalon also expressed appreciation to the CMO for his cooperation and his teams' support in the COVID-19 preventive measures for the Tibetans in the region such as adequate testing facilities through Delek Hospital and Bir Tibetan health center, providing COVID-19 care facilities to the confirmed cases and also for paying a visit to TPHC Bir which falls under his jurisdiction.

With the Tibetan New year coming up next week, Kalon, on behalf of the Department of Health and CTA extended warm wishes to all the medical and non-medical staff working in the district.

Health Kalon updates on COVID-19 measures and greets all Tibetans for the Losar

Dharamsala: Health Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk in his press briefing on 5th February 2021 gave a general update on the preventive measures taken so far by The Department of Health, CTA to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic originated from Wuhan, China. In his address, The world has been in pandemic mode for more than a year and people were still suffering and struggling against the crisis, mentioned Millions of lives across the globe had been affected with catastrophic impacts on the economy hardening every individual's life.



Figure 57 Health Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk

Nevertheless, The Tibetan community in exile especially in India and Nepal had been able to face the pandemic decently with the warm cooperation between health centers, Tibetan settlement offices, and volunteers under the leadership of CTA in general and the Health Department in particular said the Health Kalon.

Health Kalon stated that in the month of June 2020, under the CTA Emergency Relief Fund, more than 30 million INR had been issued to provide dry rations to the needy and destitute families, travel expenses for students stranded in various cities across India, and an emergency fund for buying essential needs.

He added that from March to December 2020, the Department of Health spent around 56.4 million INR in India and 8.5 million INR in Nepal to carry out various preventive measures in the form of setting up and maintaining quarantine centers and COVID-19 care centers, buying hand sanitizers, PPE kits, Tibetan Sorig Immune booster packets, and hospital expenses.

For the Tibetan Sorig Immune booster, 5.8 million INR has been spent for India and Nepal while 1.7 million INR for Tibetans in Foreign countries, benefitting nearly 25k Tibetans.

Also, around 275 Tibetans with prevailing conditions like mental health, specially-abled, and former political prisoners received a relief fund of Rs 9000 and a sanitization kit of Rs 4000.

The Health centers at various settlements were able to carry out 26,500 COVID-19 tests and so far 247 Tibetan health workers were vaccinated by coordinating with local Indian hospitals. He added that these were possible only by taking the responsibilities proactively by the ground staff and healthy coordination between the field workers and the CTA leadership.

He notified that the situation at the time was manageable, but we could not afford to be careless in the coming days of Tibetan New Year Losar. He further suggested to restrain from a grand celebration and instead suggested spiritual activities with huge loss of lives globally last year due to the pandemic.

He also appreciated the host country of CTA, India has increased its budget on health 137% times more, with the current budget standing at 223846 million INR.

Health Kalon concluded his address with an appreciation to all the dedicated frontliners including settlement officers, health staff, volunteers, and NGOs who were actively engaged in protecting our community from COVID-19 and also to our the donors USAID, PRM, and the individual donors, and others for the generous donations which made the preventive measures possible.

Lastly, He greeted all the Tibetans with a very Healthy, Prosperous, and Happy Losar The Tibetan New Year.

Health Kalon embarks on official tour to Pandoh Tashiling settlement, Kullu Manali and Tso Pema



Figure 58 Health Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk received by the settlement officer and representatives of Pandoh Tashiling.

Dharamshala: Health Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk embarked on a three-day official visit to Tibetan settlements in Pandoh Tashiling and Kullu Manali from 14-16th February 2021.

Health Kalon Choekyong Wangchuk reached Kullu on the 13th of February. Kalon first visited the Clinic and later addressed the gathering of representatives of the settlement. Kalon spoke on issues relevant to health and answered the queries of the Tibetans in Kullu. He also extolled their hard work and contributions rendered to the community in combating COVID-19 in the community. Kalon particularly acknowledged and appreciated the service rendered by the volunteers during the pandemic.



Figure 59 Health Kalon's official visitation to Pandoh Tashiling.



Figure 60 Health Kalon addressing the heads and representatives of Pandoh Tashiling settlement.



Figure 61 Health Kalon inaugurating the Open Gym



Figure 62 Kalon addressing the local leaders.



Figure 63 Kalon addressing the gathering in Tso Pema.

The next day, Kalon visited the newly built barley manufacturing house, an initiative of Tibetan youth of the region. Later, he visited the Samten Choling monastery to offer prayers on the occasion of Losar.

Later in the day, Kalon inaugurated the newly built outdoor gym located at Palrabling settlement and left for Rewalsar. In Tso Pema, Rewalsar, Kalon visited the local Tibetan Clinic and interacted with the leaders and representatives of the settlement on the health-related subject, thus concluded the three-day official tour.

Department of health receives essential covid kits from Lha Charitable Trust

Dharamsala: As the number of COVID-19 cases continued to surge in Dharamsala, Lha Charitable Trust, a Dharamsala-based NGO had graciously donated covid kits to aid COVID-19 patients through the Department of Health, CTA on 8th May 2021. Ms. Dorji Kyi, Director of Lha Charitable Trust took the initiative and had delivered the kits in person to show her support on noticing the efforts of the department. The department had received 100 boxes of vaporizer and Covid essential kits which included Pulse Oximeters, Hand sanitizers, N95 Masks, Vitamin C tablets, and Paracetamol tablets.



Figure 64 Deputy Secretary Mrs Tenzin Kunsang with the Director Dorji Kyi of Lha Charitable Trust



Figure 65 Covid essential kits which included Pulse Oximeters, Hand sanitizers, N95 Masks, Vitamin C tablets and Paracetamol tablets.

The whole of India continued its battle against the unraveling challenges amidst the second wave of the pandemic and despite the ten days lockdown in the State of Himachal Pradesh, The department continued to function with unwavering determination to stop the spread of COVID-19 with Test, Treat, Isolate, Vaccinate, and quarantine measures in place.

The Department appreciated Lha Charitable Trust for their solidarity.

Health Department condoles the demise of Dr Nyima Tsering La



Figure 66 Late Doctor Nyima Tsering la, Image Credit RFA Tibetan

Dharamsala: The Department of Health was saddened to hear the demise of Dr. Nyima Tsering la, who had passionately devoted his life to caring for the sick and vulnerable through Tibetan medical practices. His active contribution to the community during the pandemic was remarkable, as he continued to provide treatment in various capacities and locations such as in Tezu and in Delhi where he was actively engaged as COVID-19 Task Force committee member.

His selfless service to the community had benefited many families throughout his profession. He will be remembered for his good deeds and as a fighter who never gave up in the face of adversity. The department conveyed heartfelt condolences and prayers to the family.

Mundgod DTR Hospital successfully arranges refill of oxygen cylinders

Mundgod: The catastrophic second wave of Covid-19 had put the whole country in a precarious condition which resulted in the shortage of oxygen supply across India.

The DTR Mundgod Hospital on facing the shortage of oxygen, on the 5th May, hired one vehicle and sent two containers of 200 Litre capacity for a refill of oxygen at Hubli. The staff had waited patiently for six long hours to get the refill but in the end, they left with empty containers due to acute shortages.

And the very next day, Mundgod Tibetan Settlement Officer(TSO) Lhakpa Tsering la and Executive Secretary Ngawang Thupten la of DTR Hospital approached Mundgod Taluk Magistrate on the matter. Thankfully he was considerate and helped them to get two containers refilled in another refill center.



Figure 67 Mundgod TSO Lhakpa Tsering la and Ngawang Thupten la



Figure 68 TSO Lhakpa Tsering la offering the memento to Manager Benjamin of Hubli Karnataka Industrial Gas Pvt Ltd



Figure 69 TSO Lhakpa Tsering la at the Hubli oxygen refill center

Health Secretary Mr Palden Dhondup visits Covid-Care-Centers at TIPA and upper TCV



Figure 70 Health Secretary Mr Palden Dhondup at Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA)

Dharamsala: As the number of covid-19 cases kept on surging in Dharamsala, secretary of the Department of Health, CTA Mr. Palden Dhondup, Delek Hospital Director, Mr. Dawa Phunkyi, and Dharamsala Settlement officer, Mr. Kunga Tsering paid a visit to Covid-Care-Center at TIPa, upper TCV school, and Dharamsala. The visit was about tackling covid 19 by making the existing system more effective and a more collaborative effort from various stakeholders to stop the spread of the virus in the Dharamsala community.



Figure 71 Health Secretary Mr Palden Dhondup, Delek Hospital Director Mr Dawa Phunkyi Dharamsala Tibetan Settlement officer Mr Kunga Tsering and upper TCV director Tsultrim Dorji (In photo Left to right)



Figure 72 Delek Hospital Director Mr Dawa Phunkyi in the middle

Sikyong Penpa Tsering chairs series of virtual meetings with Tibetan Settlement Officers, Hospital and Clinics' head of Nepal and India



Figure 73 Sikyong Penpa Tsering, Secretary Tseggyal Chukya Dranyi, Chair of the Covid-19 Emergency Task Force, Palden Dhondup, Secretary of Health Department, Additional Secretary Jampa Phuntsok, Joint Secretary Tsering Youdon, Deputy Secretary Tenzin Kunsang duri

Dharamshala: Sikyong Penpa Tsering chaired virtual meetings held in batches with the Tibetan Settlement Officers(TSO) and the Executive Secretaries of Hospitals and Tibetan Primary Health Centers at settlements across India on 7th and 8th June 2021. A similar meeting was held with all the Tibetan Settlement Officers and Executive Secretaries of Hospitals and Tibetan Primary Health Centers at settlements across Nepal on 9th June 2021. It was aimed to assess the overall situation of COVID-19 and the status of vaccination drives at the settlements. The meeting was moderated by Chair of the Covid-19 Emergency Task-Force, Palden Dhondup, Secretary of Health Department. In the meeting he reiterated the 3 key agendas of the new Kashag to combat the pandemic:

- 1) To vaccinate the general public,
- 2) Procure medical supplies and equipment for the hospitals and clinics run by the Health Department,

3) Dispense rations to the destitute affected during the lockdown under the Home department's purview.



Figure 74 Tibetan Settlement Officers and Clinics' head at Nepal attending the virtual meetings

All the settlement officers briefed the COVID-19 situation and the status of vaccination drives at the respective settlements at the meeting. A few guidance on procurement of medical essentials were briefed and also notified them of the items that would be reached at the Department from sponsors abroad within a few days.

Program News

Department of Health, CTA observes World TB Day

Dharamsala: World TB day is commemorated annually on March 24 to educate the public about the impact of TB around the world. This year WHO has selected "The Clock is Ticking" as the theme of the day.

Based on the theme, awareness activities were conducted at various Tibetan Settlements in India. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic had set back our efforts to eliminate TB in our settlements and around the world, it is high time for us to escalate our effort in reducing the number of TB cases.

A panel discussion was organized on Tibet TV by the Department with the invitation of Dr. Sonam Topgyal from Delek Hospital and Dr. Lungtok from Tibetan Medical and Astro Institute. The panelist explained the signs and symptoms of Tuberculosis and its preventive and treatment methods based on both allopathic and traditional Tibetan Sorig methodologies. The panel discussion was broadcast on World TB day on all the social media platforms of Tibet TV and the department of Health for raising awareness among the general public. On that day, the emphasis was drawn on the importance of partnership and initiatives from the public, especially from the organizations with a large number of inmates in reducing the number of TB cases.

At Bir Tibetan Settlement, the branch health center nurses carried out awareness by sticking posters, a public talk, and by demonstration of hand washing and cough etiquette at Zabsang monastery. The awareness was made in both Tibetan and other languages understandable by the monks of the monastery.



Figure 75 Observation of World TB Day at Kollegal Dhondenling Tibetan Settlement

At Kollegal, the nurses had arranged a session for sharing experiences by two TB patients on their journey to TB cure. At the same time, to make the event more interesting, they were able to arrange a TB educational dance by five volunteer kids followed by a screening of a short animation on TB.

At Ravangla, the day was observed with a health talk by Dr. Pallavi, Medical Officer of PHC Ravangla.



Figure 76 Figure 70 Observation of World TB Day at Tashijong Tibetan Settlement

At Tashijong, the nurse did TB screening (active case finding) to 54 monastic students where the nurses asked for TB symptoms like; cough for more than two weeks, cough with blood in sputum, pain in the chest, Fever, loss of weight, etc. No students were reported with any of the TB symptoms.



Figure 77 Observation of World TB Day at Tenzingang Tibetan Settlement

At Tenzingang, the nurses attended the TB awareness program by the District TB officer on 24th March 2021, and the next day they presented on TB causes, S/s, Diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and diet intake to 27 settlement people and 72 students. They also stressed the importance of TB diagnostic tests upon symptomatic.

At Mainpat, due to COVID-19 cases, the nurses could not summon the public for gathering, hence, observed the day by communicating the message by sharing TB animation and videos in the community WhatsApp group.

At Delhi, Health Talk was given to the public on TB prevention and symptoms. Similar awareness talks were given to the rest of the settlements.

Department of Health observes World Health Day 2021

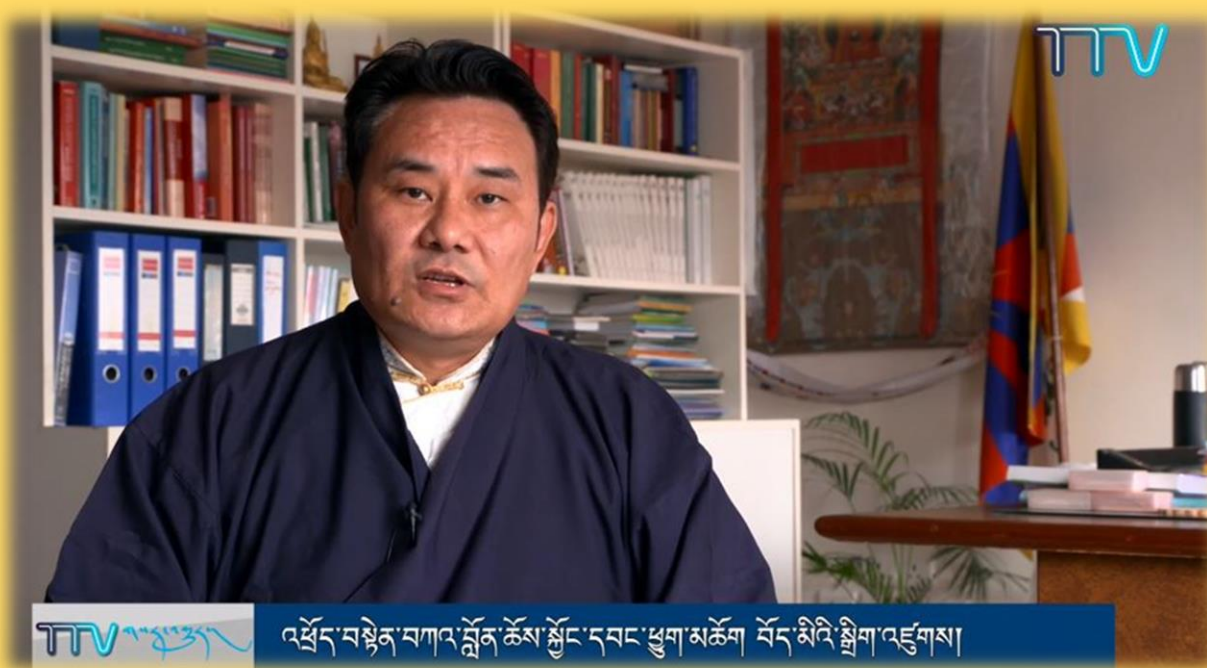


Figure 78 Health Kalon addressing on the World Health Day : Screen Grab Image

Dharamsala: On 7th April 2021 amidst the pandemic department of health, CTA observed this year's World Health Day-themed "Building a Fairer and Healthier world." To observe the day, the department had launched several online videos related to healthy lifestyle campaigns such as live stream breathing exercise by Tulku Lobsang, Zumba Dance, and the making of healthy and colorful Roti (bread) on World Health Day.



Figure 79 Tofu Recipe



Figure 80 Kidney beans Recipe



Figure 81 Figure 81 Kidney beans Recipe



Figure 82 Fruit Salad Recipe



Figure 83 Figure 83 Chat Salad Recipe

The Department of Health, CTA under the guidance of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, persevered since 1981 to provide equitable health to the exile Tibetan population have been working on various programs like Mother and Child Health, Substance abuse, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis, Physically challenged people, Mental Health, Tibetan Medicare System. Under the department's Tibetan Medicare System (TMS), special considerations have been undertaken to afford the medical expenses of the destitute people. Likewise, under CCOCC programs, DoHe nurses pay door-to-door household visits to provide basic medical service in Tibetan settlements which has particularly proven very beneficial for the people with difficulty in commuting.

Earlier TB disease used to be the most deadly and prevalent disease in our community, but with the consistent efforts to reduce TB cases, significant progress with 387 patients in 2012 has now reduced to 185 in 2019. Also, Hepatitis -B prevalence in Bylakuppe settlement was 8.9% in 2014, and research of 15 settlements with a population of 10,565 has shown a 7% prevalence of Heb -B. Another challenge being Stomach Cancer, A research study by DoHe suggests that H-Pylori bacteria might be a factor leading to Stomach Cancer. The CTA is also conducting research to treat the bacteria by integrating the allopathic and Traditional Tibetan Sorig approach. The research study shows that the prevalence of H-pylori is almost 50% from a study sample of 623 people.

He also mentioned that with the rise of sedentary lifestyles there seem to be rising numbers of diseases like Hypertension, Diabetes, and Thyroid disorders. And these diseases can be taken care of by being mindful of our diets, at the same time monitoring the intake of alcohol, smoking, other intoxications, and sedentary lifestyle.

Throughout the pandemic, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) via the Department of Health (DoHe) continues to provide various preventive as well as welfare facilities for the underprivileged population as well as quarantine centers, COVID-19 Care Center (CCC), Medical Expenses, Sanitizers, Active and Passive Screening, testing facilities (RT-PCR and Rapid) tests, counseling services and relief packages to the most vulnerable groups of the community.

To sum up, the department of Health reached out to the entire population of our community equally with a total expenditure of around 115 million INR on precautionary measures till March 2021; the expenditure in India being 94.2 million INR and 21.6 million INR in Nepal.

Similarly, the other departments of CTA have contributed during the Pandemic.

Health Kalon in his address for the day stated that everyone has experienced tremendous hardships and continues to endure unprecedented hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Especially, those who are underprivileged and have poor access to health care facilities. Thus this year's theme resonates with the current scenario created by the pandemic he added.

He concluded his message by urging everyone to take steps towards a healthy lifestyle and emphasized that everyone should get the vaccination when eligible and continue to take the basic precautionary measures to triumph this pandemic together.

A Collective response to the pandemic

Figure 84 ATWS head Tsering Dhondup and staff in action

Dharamsala: Amidst the second wave of the COVID 19 pandemic, India which is home to about 17.7% of the world population has recorded the highest number of daily COVID-19 cases since the beginning of the pandemic and has witnessed an unprecedented loss of lives. The situation at the time was no different in the Tibetan settlements across India as there had been an increased number of daily COVID 19 cases, including the Dharamsala, which is the abode of H.H the 14th Dalai lama.

Figure 85 ATWS staff making dough

As for the weekly covid-status of the exile Tibetan community, Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe updated that the mass testing drive that week covered 2332 Tibetans in India and Nepal. Of those tested individuals, Dr. Tsamchoe reported 121 new cases and 2 deaths. With this, the total number of reported cases of the exile Tibetan community was 4802, 4139 recoveries, 124 deaths, and 639 active cases.⁸



Figure 84 Figure 86 ATWS staff working collectively

With the recent surge in cases at Dharamsala, the department has made necessary arrangements to control the spread like ramping up on testing and isolation of symptomatic cases as well as quarantining of contacts through the initiation of prompt contact tracing.



Figure 85 Staff posing while preparing



Figure 86 Staff making bread and tea

The quarantine center at ATWS, Dharamsala has been set up on 20th April 2020 for those who travel to and fro from Dharamsala to isolate and monitor for symptoms before staying in their residents. Till 5th May 2021, 1108 Tibetans had received the quarantine service at ATWS. Given the recent huge spike of cases, another isolation center at ATWS was opened in addition to the Isolation center at Gambir Ganj. The director and Staff at the new isolation center at ATWS extended their wholehearted support in providing accommodation and care for those under isolation, for example on 2nd May 2021 was a Sunday and they were supposedly off duty, however, the staff of ATWS spared their holiday to prepare and serve food for Tibetans under quarantine at ATWS in the absence of cook.

The Department of health deeply appreciated their efforts and active engagement in serving on the frontline of this pandemic. Their gesture was commendable during such challenging times.

As of 2nd May 2021, ATWS has 50 COVID-19 cases under isolation and 36 Tibetans under quarantine.

The department urges all to join hands in stopping the spread of the virus, by wearing masks, Limiting contacts, avoiding crowds, and early reporting of Influenza-like illness. Together WE CAN THRIVE.

Health Kalon concluded his address with appreciation to all the dedicated nurses, healthcare workers, and all the frontliners who are actively engaged in protecting our community and slowing the pace of the pandemic.

Caring for COVID-19 patients: Nurses of Tibetan primary health center Delhi keeps up an unrelenting fight against Covid



Figure 87 Figure 87 Caring for COVID-19 Patients Nurses of Tibetan primary health centre Delhi keeps up an unrelenting fight against Covid-19.

Dharamshala: India's national capital remains one of the worst impacted regions with a Covid-19 surge since the deadly second wave, with 19,832 new cases in the last 24 hours and so with an increasing number of cases among Tibetans in the capital.

Bearing the brunt at the frontlines are the nurses of the Tibetan primary health center, Delhi that continues on an unrelenting fight against the pandemic who had been providing much-needed care, guidance, and treatment for the Covid-19 patients since the pandemic struck.

The TPHC fills up daily with a minimum of 10-15 patients both symptomatic and asymptomatic with the nurses attending to all these cases in addition to providing door-to-door treatment and care for those who could not visit the clinic.

Under the guidance of Dr. Nyendak and in collaboration with doctors of Tibetan medical and Astro institute Delhi, the nurses of TPHC Delhi had been treating mild and moderate cases.

They vigorously monitored those kept under home isolation with suspected symptoms and the primary contacts for any signs of deteriorating health who were provided both allopathic and Tibetan medicines for an immunity boost. The nurses also rendered door-to-door treatment and care for those who could not visit the clinic.

On top of all that, they also carried out the strenuous task of routine contact tracing and those in isolation to stem the spread of the deadly, mutating virus.



Figure 88 A patient receiving treatment at Delhi TPHC

Besides, the TPHC nurses also guided patients with diet planning, promote awareness on the prevention of COVID-19, mental-health support, and counseled whenever required.

Despite the physical, mental, emotional toll and the imminent risk to their lives, the nurses of Samyeling Tibetan settlement, Delhi stayed on duty day in and day out, with no respite, to ensure that everyone else was safe.

Training News

Tibetan hospitals receive training on COVID-19 vaccine program

Dharamshala: As the country prepares to roll out the vaccination drive in January 2021, 3 hospitals under the Department of Health, CTA had received training from their respective district health facility for the COVID-19 vaccination program.



Figure 89 COVID-19 vaccination mock drill at Miao



Figure 90 Tsojhe hospital, byakupsee health staffs attending COVID vaccination training



Figure 91 Miao health staff at Vaccination training



Figure 92 health staff at Miao practicing COVID vaccination mock drill



Figure 93 Virtual training for COVID vaccine at phende hospital, Hunsur

The training program was conducted virtually at Phende hospital, Hunsur, while the health staff of Menlha hospital, Miao and Tsojhe Khangsar Bylakupee have attended the training at CHC Miao and PHC Bylakupee hospital respectively.

The COVID-19 vaccination training was organized by the state government through a district health officer. Orientation on COVID -19 vaccination in Mysore district was organized by Dr. Sughir Nayak, DHO & RCH Officer & SMO WHO on 22nd Dec 2020 for the staff of Phende Hospital, Hunsur. The same training was conducted at PHC Bylakuppe and CHC Miao Government hospital on 5 January 2021 by Dr. Ravi, M.O, and Dr. Jongsom M.O respectively.

The nurses who took the training have found the sessions informative as the training was conducted through PPT presentations, instructive videos, and interactive discussions.

Key learning from the training was about roles and responsibilities of the vaccination team, vaccine safety, vaccine logistic management, use of digital application CO-WIN, and waste disposal.

In total, 17 health staff, 12 from Hunsur, 3 from Miao, and 2 from Bylakupee received the training. The training concluded successfully with a mock drill conducted at Miao on 11th January 2021.

Tackling COVID-19 through Social and Behavior Change Communication training for nurses: DOHe initiative

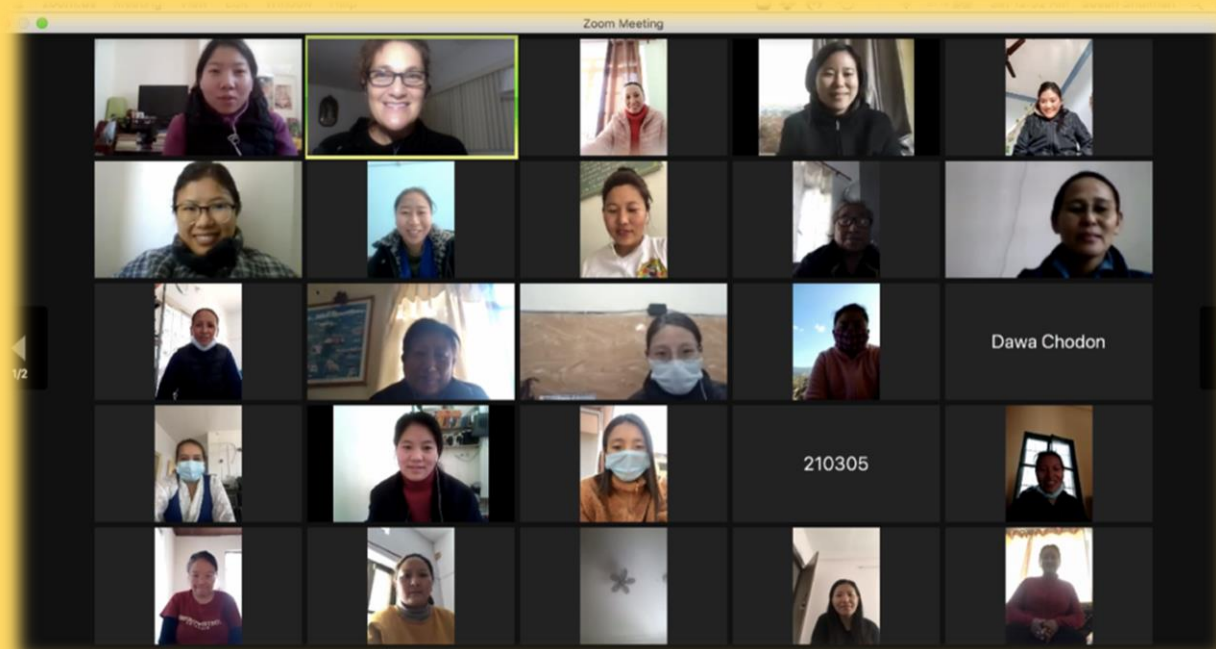


Figure 94 Tackling COVID-19 through Social and Behavior Change Communication training for nurses: DOHe initiative

Dharamsala: The Department of Health, CTA began the Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) workshop for a total of 38 branch health centers' nurses from various settlements on 23rd January 2021.



Figure 95 SBCC training in session.

The purpose of the training was to deepen the knowledge and improve the skills of CCOCC nurses on SBCC to enhance their ability to motivate patients and community members to adopt and sustain healthy habits and behaviors.

Especially in the era of COVID-19, the nurses play a central role in creating awareness of COVID appropriate behavior to protect and support community members from becoming a victim of COVID-19. The training aimed to build specific SBCC skills to not only impart information on COVID-19 rather address the specific barriers to adopting COVID-19 appropriate behavior to ensure the safety of community members.

The training sessions were conducted virtually by Tsewang Yangtso from Dharamsala. The health educator Susan Shulman joined from the US. Susan has 20 years of working experience in international public health with a focus on SBCC. She has been working with DoHe since 2019. Though, this time her contribution for the department was a purely voluntary commitment to improve the health education system in our community.

The topics covered in the sessions were:

1. What really motivates people to Take Action?
2. Communicating SUCCESSFULLY – how to convey your messages sticky?
3. Best practices for Group Activity
4. OARS (Open-Ended Questions, Affirmation, Reflective Listening, Summarization) Group Facilitation Skills
5. 1-on-1 Counseling Skills
6. Dealing with patient

The training was composed of seven sessions each extending to over 1.5 – 2 hours long. It also featured interactive Q&A sessions and breakout rooms to enable greater engagement and participation. Each session was followed by pre and post-questions through Survey Monkey platforms to identify areas requiring more attention depending on the issues concerning Substance Abuse, Depression, Hep-B Vaccination, and Monitoring BP in their respective communities. The workshop conducted virtually concluded on 6th February 2021 and was funded by USAID.

Training of Pharmacists under the Department of Health concludes



Figure 96 Health Secretary and OSM Program Manager during the inaugural session. Photo DoHe

Dharamshala: The Department of Health, CTA concluded a two-day training on pharmacy inventory management for pharmacists of the Department of Health CTA on 23rd March 2021. The training was organized by the Optimal Service Model (OSM) section of the department.

The objective of this training was to enhance the knowledge of DoHe pharmacists on inventory management techniques in order to improve hospital services and pharmacy operational efficiency.

Chief Guest Health Secretary Palden Dhondup presided over the inaugural session. He observed the significance of such training sessions for Tibetan pharmacists and urged the pharmacists to focus on strengthening the pharmacist-patient relationship.

OSM program coordinator Tsering briefed participants on the objectives of the training and discussed the recently launched TVHA Essential medicine list-2020.

On the second day, Resource person Mr Ram Sahu gave a presentation on ABC Analysis, Storage/distribution of medicines, calculating drug requirement by health problems, quantification methods, drug management cycle, and others. After the presentation by Mr Ram, Our Pharmacist Karma Gyurmey spoke on the generic drugs and their general misconceptions.

11 Pharmacists from Mundgod DTR hospital, Phende hospital, Kollegal DVT hospital, Tsojhe hospital, Menlha hospital, Mainpath TPHC, Bandara TPHC, Dekiling TPHC, Bir TPHC, Ladakh TPHC, and Delhi TPHC participated in the virtual program.

The training was funded by USAID under TSRR Project.

Youth Discussion Series on Emotional Hygiene



Figure 97 Dr Kunga Norzom during one of the session

Dharamshala: The Department of Health, CTA, organized a Youth Discussion Series on Emotional Hygiene in collaboration with Tibetan Mental Health with support from PRM.

The series held from May to June 2021, covered six discussions on the topics:

- 1 Managing Stress and Anxiety During Covid-19
- 2 Emotional Intelligence: How to Identify, Describe, and Manage Difficult Emotions
- 3 Depression and Bipolar Disorder: Stigma and Cultural Beliefs
- 4 Understanding Childhood and Intergenerational Trauma, and Resilience
- 5 Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships: How to Communicate Effectively and Understanding Each Others' Needs
- 6 Incorporating meditation and Mindfulness into Each Day



Figure 98 Geshe Lharampa Thabkhe Lodroe, Sera Jey Monastery.

The two helpline advisors of the Department, Dr. Kunga Norzom, Tibetan Mental Health, and Geshe Lharampa Thabkhe Lodroe, Sera Jey Monastery led the discussions.

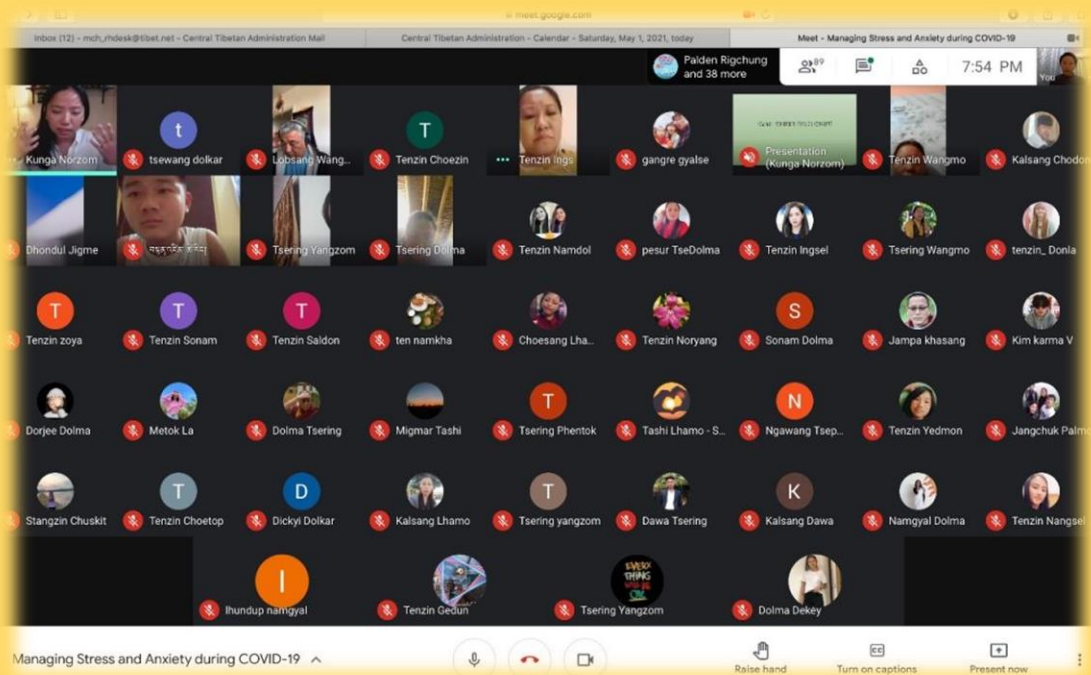


Figure 99 Youth Discussion Series on Emotional Hygiene organised by Dept of Health.

The series shed light on emotional awareness, healthy coping mechanisms, how to seek help. It also saw a repeated discussion on the relationship between physical and emotional well-being, the importance of language in speaking about mental health, and people suffering from mental disorders.

Department of Health, CTA

The Department of Health, CTA is kickstarting its Youth Discussion Series on Emotional Hygiene with the topic,

Managing Stress and Anxiety during COVID-19



Dr. Kunga Norzom
MSW, PsyD.
Tibetan Mental Health
Minneapolis, USA



May 1st, 2021
07:00PM - 08:30PM

Google meet link:

<https://meet.google.com/jox-xhko-nxd>



More than 35 school and college-going students, teachers, and other youth in the community participated in the series.

The Department of Health thanked all the participants for their insightful questions making the series interactive. And also to our two advisors and PRM for making the series happen.

The series concluded on 5 June 2021.

80 percent of Tibetan residents in Ladakh and Jangthang receive first dose of Covid-19 vaccine



Figure 100 Mass vaccination drive underway in Ladakh and Jangthang organised by Tibetan Primary Health Center Ladakh with the support from UT Government.

Ladakh: By 11th June 2021, 80 percent of Tibetans residing in Ladakh and Jangthang had received at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine as part of the COVID-19 Vaccination drive launched by the Tibetan Primary Health Center Ladakh with the support from UT Government which started on March 2021.

As of 11 June, the TPHC had vaccinated 2597 Tibetans and 840 locals (all 18 plus) with the first dose of the Covid vaccine in addition to 1283 Tibetans and 166 locals (all 18 plus) who had been fully vaccinated.



Figure 101 Mass vaccination drive underway in Ladakh and Jangthang organised by Tibetan Primary Health Center Ladakh with the support from UT Government.

Despite the vaccine shortage across India, especially for the age group of 18-44, the authorities and staff of Tibetan Primary Health Center in Ladakh had successfully vaccinated 799 adults from 18-44 with the first dose.



Figure 102 Mass vaccination drive underway in Ladakh and Jangthang organised by Tibetan Primary Health Center Ladakh with the support from UT Government.

Virtual session held on Understanding Substance Use Disorder

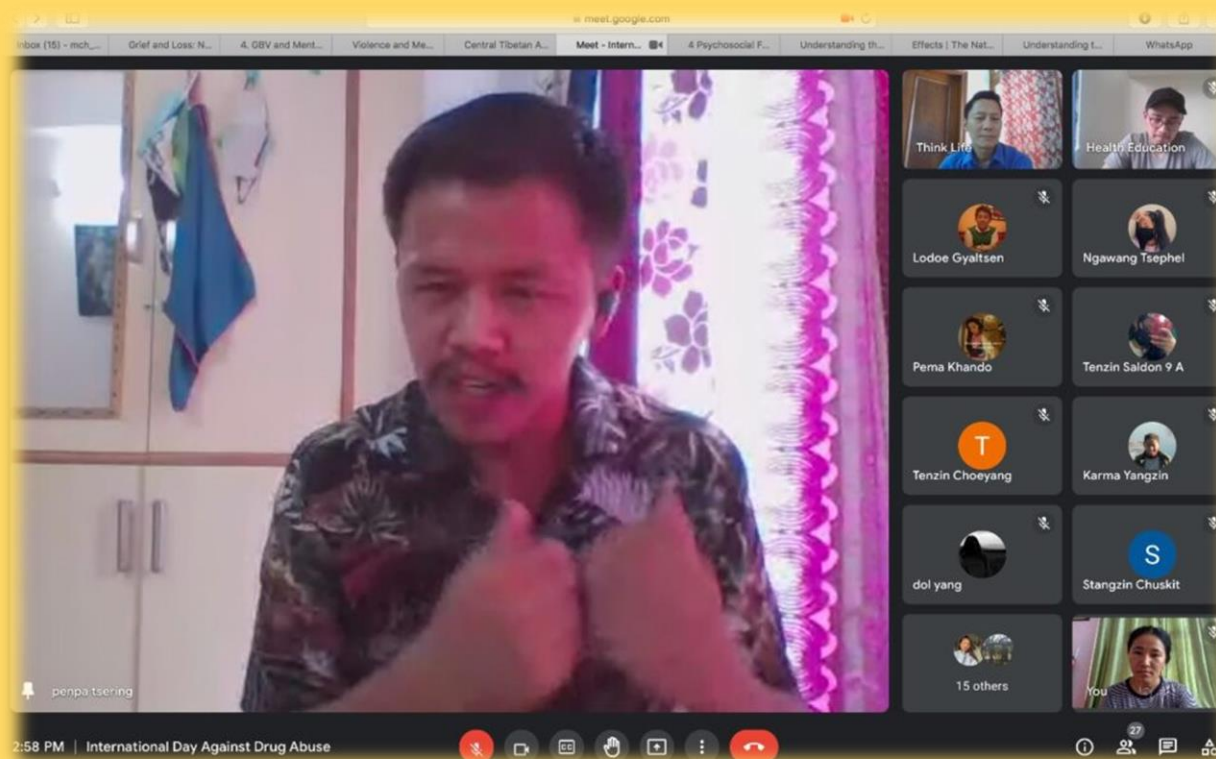


Figure 103 Penpa Tsering addressing the session.

Dharamsala: On 26th June 2021, International Day Against Drug Abuse, the Department of Health, CTA organized a virtual awareness session with school students and counselors on Substance Use Problems in the Tibetan community in India. This session, led by Ngawang Nyima la from Zhidhey Khangsar, a Rehabilitation Center in Dehradun, and Penpa Tsering la, a Delhi University student, saw a discussion around the following key points:

1. Substance use disorder (SUD) is a disease just like any other disease. However, the people/society/family's treatment of people suffering from SUD is different from those suffering from heart disease or any other ailments. Why is it so?
2. Some factors for addiction problem includes early usage, lack of parental love and guidance, male, childhood abuse and neglect, existing mental health problems, peer pressure, and genetics. Protective factors include secure attachment relationships with parents or other primary caregivers, healthy coping means-time management, positive habit building.
3. The stigma around people suffering from SUD inhibits people from sharing their problems and seeking help which further isolates them from society.
4. Ways to help your friend or family with substance use problems: listen to them, be there for them, encourage and validate their efforts, let them know you care for them. If you cannot help, then do not harm them at the least. Recovery from SUD is a journey rather than a destination.
5. Ask the question "What happened to you?" instead of, "What is wrong with you?".

As the session ended, all the attendees were moved by the inspirational recovery journey made by Mr. Penpa Tsering la and his will to pursue further studies in the field to serve for reaching a wider impact. Also for the insight on the field by Mr. Ngawang Nyima la with 17 long years of experience of working at

the rehabilitation center. The department believes that awareness is one of the key factors in eliminating SUD in our communities as the solution begins from the awareness.



Figure 104 Ngawang Nyima addressing the session.



Figure 105 Students and counsellors attending the session.

Water Sanitation and Hygiene News

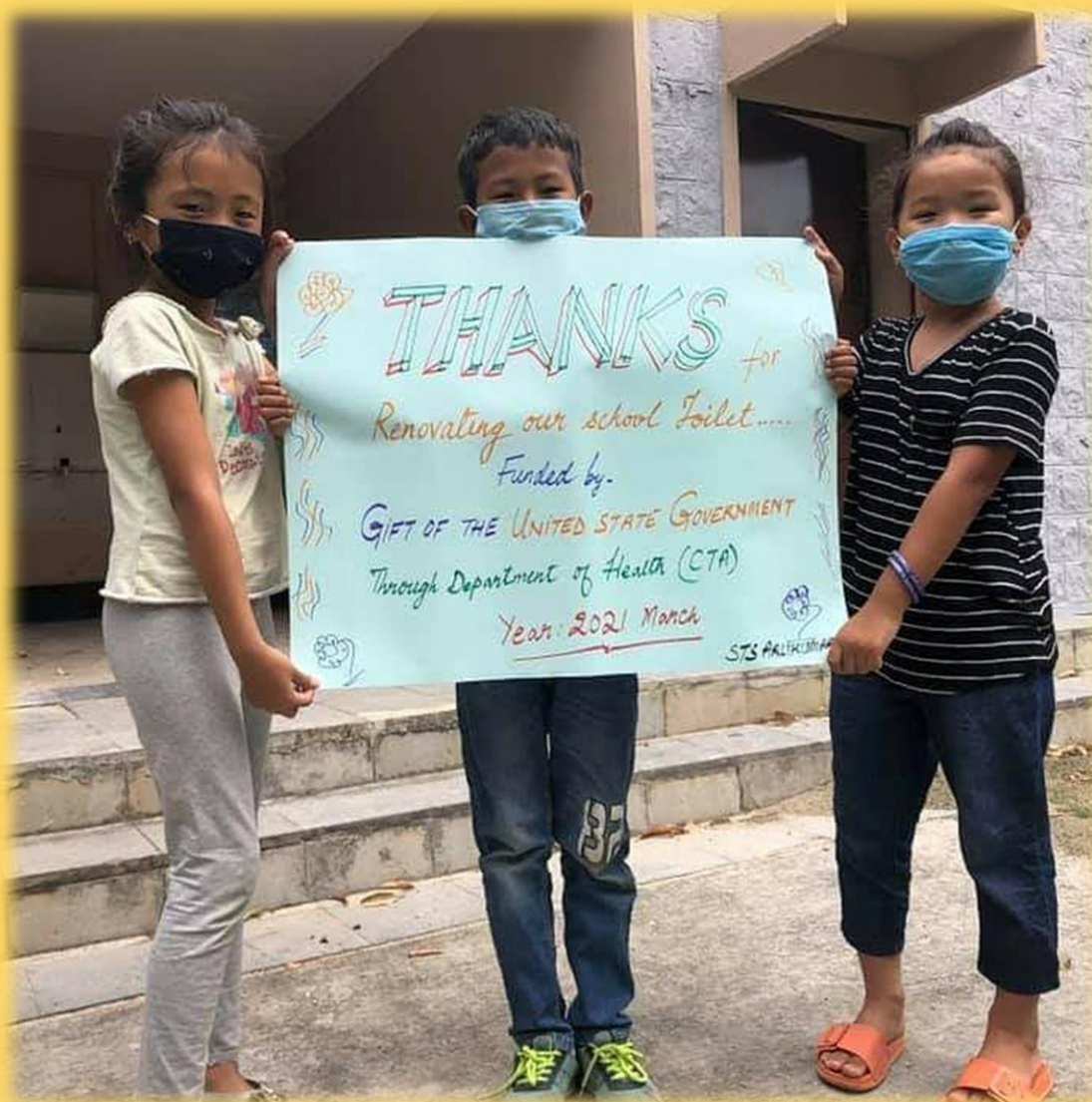
1. Renovation of STS Arlikumari school toilet:

The STS Arlikumari School located in camp no 4 of Lugsam Settlement, is a primary school with classes from 1st to 5th Standard with a total of around 34 students. The renovation work of the toilet started on 9th January 2021. During the implementation of the project, the school Headmaster, Accountant, and School Committee members had periodically inspected the progress of the work and raw materials as specified in the quotation.



Following were the facilities renovated in the school toilets:

- a) 2 new main doors were fitted (boys and girl's toilets)
- b) 7 new toilet commodes were fitted (Girls-3 and Boys-4)



- c) New tiles fitted inside the toilet.
- d) Repaired all the doors of the toilet.
- e) 9 Aluminium standing glass ventilation has been fitted.
- f) Replaced all pipe connections up to the septic tank.

The project was completed on 9th March 2021. Under this project, 2 toilets which were earlier blocked, was also renovated and are now back in use for the students. Now, the students can use the toilets without waiting in the queue, and with the new tiles laid, it is easier to wash and maintain too.

2. Renovation of STS Kailashpuram school toilet:

This renovation project started on 1st February 2021 and was completed on 16th March 2021. Under this project, the following facilities were provided such as:

- a) 2 Toilet washbasins (1 for girls and 1 for boys' toilets)
- b) Tiles were fitted in all the 9 toilets as they were broken and looked very unhygienic.
- c) Renovated toilet wall with proper cement and painted both inside and outside walls.
- d) 7 Toilet doors were replaced as existing ones were of fiber and it's not very durable besides all the doors were broken and students find themselves uneasy while using the toilet.

- e) Chamber and pipe for the washbasin replaced as current ones were used for a long time and broken, also with frequent water blockage and leakages everywhere.
- f) Replaced all pipe connections up to the septic tank



Through these projects, the cleanliness and hygiene of the school are upgraded. Chances of students and teachers getting sick will be less and they can use the school toilet without worrying about its infrastructure.

3. Construction of drainage at STS Lobersing, Odisha:

The Drainage project of Lobersing School started on 25th January 2021. Under this project, drainage measuring 18 inches / 18 inches / 420 feet work in length was constructed. The project was completed on 25th February 2021.



Through this project, the students and teachers will face fewer problems during the rainy season. Besides, the infrastructure of the school building will be benefited by having a proper drainage system. The project was funded by the Gift of the United States Government.

4. Renovation of toilets at Lachung Village, Gangtok:



On 2nd March 2021, a resolution was passed by the Project Committee of Lachung village, Gangtok for the renovation of toilets at the Settlement office. Due to its remote location and being far away from the city, it was difficult to meet all the requirements for the project. Therefore, the settlement and Representatives of the Lachung community agreed upon the following clauses

1. That the construction work was to be awarded on a daily wage basis to Mr. Pempa Dorjee and his helper for Rs: 33,600.00 as there are no available choices for the lump sum contract.
2. Six members were appointed as project committee with a specific designation to look after the project as project management committee (P.M.C)
3. The PMC collectively procured the materials required from the Dealer Shreenath Prasad, Mangan @ Rs: 220, 050.
4. PMC monitored the proper implementation of the project, verification of the materials procured, and work on a daily basis with the supervisor.

The Renovation work was completed on 29th March 2021 and benefits a total of 7 Families.

5. Construction of Individual toilets at Miao:



On 15th Jan 2021, a meeting was held in the presence of the Settlement office Secretary for the construction of individual toilets at Miao. As per the meeting minutes, it was decided that they would start the project with quotations from two contractors.

The project began on 2nd Feb 2021 and was completed on 31st March 2021. The materials required for the project were procured from the Tibetan cooperative society, Miao as their rate was similar to the rest of the shops and it would be more convenient as it is located within the camp.

With the construction of bathroom cum toilets, it benefits a total of 6 members of 3 males and females each. The families are now equipped with fully furnished toilets with proper facilities of separate toilet and bathroom, ventilation, water tap, and locked system. The beneficiaries are very much thankful to PRM for the Gift of the United States of Government.

6. Installation of water meters at Hunsur:



On 11th Jan 2021, the committee members went to collect quotations for the water meters from Mysore for budget approval. After the approval of the budget, the settlement officer along with the Project Officer and other 4 committee members went to procure the water meter equipment from Mysore.

The settlement officer called all the camp leaders on 2nd March 2021 for the distribution of the water meters at their community hall, at the gathering, he had highlighted the importance of the installation of water meters and the purpose behind the installation of water meters.

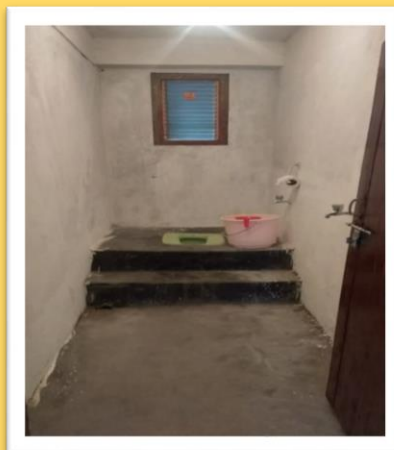
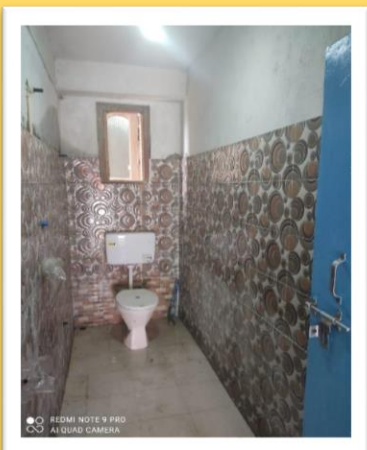
Apart from that, the committee decided to give the water meter installation work to the camp leaders of villages A and K, as they charge less as compared to the other contractor's rate.

It took almost 18 days to fit the water meters at 350 households. The project was completed on 20th March 2021. Some villagers had shared the benefits of the installation of the water meter stating that after the installation, the water pressure is much higher and those who were not getting sufficient water before also started to get the water like the rest of the households. The beneficiaries are very much satisfied with this project.

7. Renovation of Toilets at Lachen Village, Gangtok:

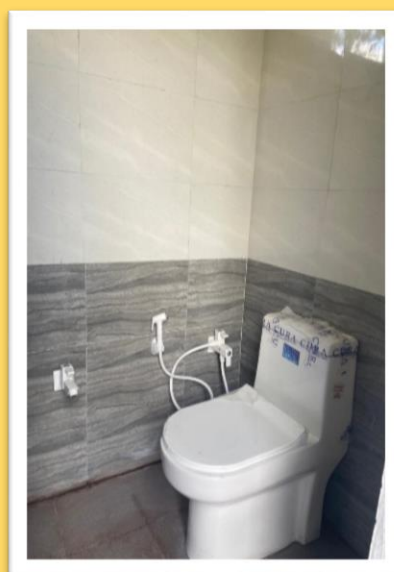
Lachen village is situated in the Northern part of Sikkim with a total of 104 residents (Male: 58, Female: 46), has been living there amidst the local Indian community. The people living there depend upon seasonal tourists and road construction works. The income generated from these sources merely feeds their families. The existing toilet is old and required renovation for public use during gatherings and functions.

Since the community is located at a distance more than 120 kilometers away from the nearest city, there is no option of acquiring any fund from the State government for this renovation project.



Therefore, the project was proposed to the Health Department of CTA and was implemented successfully under the supervision of the Tibetan Settlement Office, Gangtok, and the project management committee at the site. The community people are grateful for this gift from the United States Government and thankful as well.

8. Construction of community toilets at Hunsur:



Rabgyaling Tibetan Settlement is one of the five largest Tibetan Settlements situated in Southern India. There are 13 ½ villages identified on an alphabetical basis and each village has its own community hall for the purpose of prayers, meetings, health talks, and marriage functions, etc. Among 13 ½ villages, 8 villages do not have community toilets.

They tried to construct the toilet through donations within the villages but couldn't succeed. So the Department saw the need and the importance of community toilets in each village to facilitate the visitors in the community hall and also to keep the environment clean and hygienic.

Therefore, we had proposed this project and got sanctioned by the PRM, US. The Construction work of Community toilets got started on 27th Jan and so far the layout of the foundation and structuring of the toilets are done. The project will be completed after the fitting of tiles and some final touchup.

10. Construction of Rainwater Harvesting:



Under this project, a Rainwater tank of Size 12ftx7ftx6.5ft with 16k liters Capacity was constructed. The work included the construction of a small structure for water storage and the laying of pipelines from filtration to tank areas. The committee has given the project on Labour cost and while the materials were bought by themselves. Through this project, 3 households who are living in the same compounds will no longer face any problem of drinking water. It will indeed mitigate the water scarcity problem faced by these families for years.

All 3 concerned families are able to get the water taps in their respective homes. They are also provided with electric pumps for water pumping and rainwater harvesting PVC pipes and all necessary peripheral goods such as sandy stones, coal, and the rendering of technical assistants for installation of filters for filtering rooftop water. The project benefits a total of 6 members, 2 females and 4 males. The project was made possible with the financial support as a Gift of the United States Government.

9. Construction of Toilets at Handicraft center:



The Tibetan Handicraft Cooperative society, Dharamsala supports 67 Tibetan refugees of which the majority of the workers are women. The Society provides training and jobs to marginalized Tibetan women and helps them in their children's education and health care.

Before the construction of the toilets and bathroom, at least 9 individuals would share one toilet which results in huge inconvenience for the members of the society. The toilets are always occupied in the morning since everyone has to get ready for work.

Through this project, now the residents have adequate toilets and bathroom facilities that are hygienic and accessible to all members of the society especially elders and children.

The Project was funded by the Tibet Fund through the Department of Health.

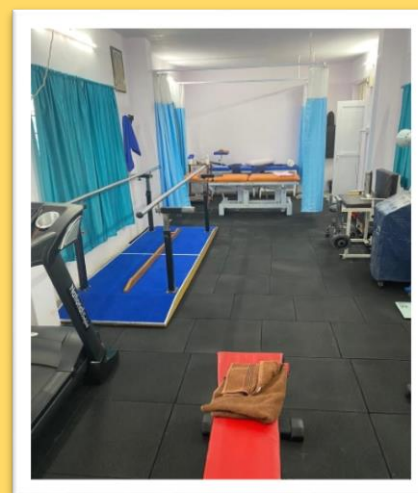
10. Roofing and renovation at TPHC, Bir:



On 1st February 2021, the roofing and the renovation work at TPHC Bir started and was successfully completed by the end of March 2021. This project was implemented under the supervision of the Executive Secretary of the Hospital and got completed before the date written on the agreement.

Through this project, the problems of both staffs and patients faced during the monsoon season with heavy rain water flowing in the middle of the building was solved. Moreover with this roofing project, a separation of the staff quarters above

and hospital at the ground floor was made possible. Under this project, a separate septic tank for the medical liquid waste was also made to prevent any contamination through it.



On the ground floor, 2 rooms were renovated for the physio room, which was earlier on the first floor. With the physio room being shifted on the ground floor, now the elderly Tibetans and people in need of therapy can access the facility without the barrier of staircases.

11. Renovation of Doctor's quarter and boundary wall at Odisha, Menlha Hospital:



On 15th March 2021, the renovation project of Phuntsokling Menlha Hospital's Doctor Quarter got completed under the guidance of the Executive secretary. The project work was started on 1st December, 2020.

The old windows and doors were replaced with new standard aluminum slider with mosquito proof mesh, terrace was renovated with the GI sheet. A complete boundary wall with a height of 6ft was constructed around the building to ensure safety from the local trespasser and animals.