

TIBETAN HEALTH

JAN - JUNE 2023



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, CTA

About Us

The Department of Health (DOHe) of the Central Tibetan Administration manages and finances 48 health centers in India and Nepal including Ngoenga School for exiled Tibetan children with disability, along with different health programs, projects, and activities. The Department of Health is officially registered as Tibetan Voluntary Health Association.

Tibetan Health is the official Newsletter of the DOHe. It is Bi-annual publication to keep DOH's partners, donors and supporters informed of the Department's health initiatives.

The newsletter gives an overview of health programs, projects, activities and needs of the department. Most significantly, it captures success stories and outstanding contributions of all DOHe's field health staff including hospital administrators, doctors, nurses and community health workers etc.

This newsletter is dedicated to the field health staff for their unwavering commitment and dedication to serve the community, which are the backbone of successful and unique exiled Tibetan healthcare system.

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RMNCH-A and TB Monitoring and Awareness programs for Tibetans in South India



DOHe's program coordinator for RMNCH-A and TB Ms. Kelsang Chodon visited four Tibetan settlements in south India for 14 days to undertake monitoring and awareness programs mandated under the RMNCH-A and TB program. She visited Tibetan settlements in Kollegal, Hunsur, Bylakuppe, and Mundgod from 24 June 2023.

Ten-day Orientation Course on Sowa-Rigpa for the Tibetan Healthcare Professionals

The DOHe conducted an Orientation Course on Sowa-Rigpa from 21 June 2023 to 30 June 2023 at the Sowa-Rigpa College in Bengaluru. The course was attended by 11 healthcare professionals from nine different Tibetan settlements



Chief Representative Officer (CRO) of South Zone, Mr Jigme Tsultrim, presided over the inaugural ceremony of the course.

A Farewell tea for the Outgoing Additional secretary



Staff of the DOHe hosted a tea party bid farewell to the outgoing additional secretary Mr. Jampa Phuntsok, on 22 June 2023. Mr Jampa Phuntsok has served the department for seven years, and has been transferred to the Home Department.

Health Training for monks from Tibetan settlements situated in North-East Part of India



The DOHe conducted a month-long basic health training program for monks from Tibetan settlements situated in Northeastern part of India. The training was arranged at Tibetan Primary Health Center in Deckyiling and commenced on 19 June 2023. Five Monks from Tibetan settlements in Kalimpong, Darjeeling and Gangtok took part in the training. The training was facilitated by Dr. Wangdak joined by

head nurse Tsering Dickyi and physical therapist Tenzin Yega.

Health Secretary Pay Assessment Visited to Health Facilities in Bir and Chauntra Tibetan Settlements.

Secretary Dawa Tsultrim, accompanied by Chief Project Officer Mr. Tsering, of the DOHe paid an assessment visit to health facilities in Bir and Chauntra on 15 June 2023.



During the visit, Secretary Dawa met with Tibetan Settlement Officers, President of the Local Tibetan Assembly, and President of the Bir Tibetan Settlement and the Executive Secretary of the Tibetan Primary Health Centre in Bir. Secretary discussed a wide range of issues, including shortages of staff quarters for the health center. He visited clinics and ongoing project sites of the health department in the settlements.

Primary Health Care Centre in Bir and Apex Hospital jointly Launched Free Health Camp

The Tibetan Primary Health Care Centre in Bir and Dharamshala-based Apex Hospital jointly organised a free health camp on 3 June 2023.



The free health camp comprises a group of specialist doctors, such as cardiologist, ophthalmologist, pediatrician, gynecologist and anesthetist. The team conducted various health check-ups including Electrocardiography (ECG) and Glucometer random blood sugar (GRBS) along with detailed medical examinations according to the needs of the patients. This was the second joint free health camp undertaken by the two hospitals. A total of 135 Tibetans took part in the free health camp.

Tibetans in Puruwala Settlement Observed World Environment

Marking the 50th anniversary of the World Environment Day, Tibetans in Puruwala Tibetan settlement undertook a mass cleaning drive across the settlement.



The program was jointly initiated by the Regional Tibetan Women Association and Tibetan Youth Congress. Similarly, an awareness program was organized. On the same day, a separate program to raise awareness on the environment was organized. During which, volunteers of the mass cleaning drive were presented with souvenirs as a token of appreciation.

Health Department Conducted Hepatitis Screening and Vaccination Campaign at Ravangla

The DOHe launched a free Hepatitis B and C screening and Vaccination campaign for Tibetans in Ravangla on 26 May 2023. The program was initiated with close guidance and support from the Tibetan settlement office in Ravangla.



Following the screening, Tibetans tested negative are provided entire hepatitis vaccination doses at free of charge. Tibetans tested positive will undergo baseline tests to assess the spectrum of the infection. A total of 353 Tibetans in the settlement were covered under the camping, till date.



DOHe further conducts annual and biannual follow-up tests for the patients. To support the Tibetans tested positive can avail financial support to cover at least 50% of the medical cost to undertake necessary medication.

The campaign was funded by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM, US).

Hepatitis B Awareness Drive Organised Across Tibetan Settlements in Dehradun and Delhi

The DOHe conducted Hepatitis B awareness and field program of Dekyiling, Clementtown and Primary Health Center, Delhi from 23rd to 26th May 2023. The program coordinator met with the beneficiaries of direct beneficiaries and community members to understand the pre-knowledge on hepatitis B.

The health awareness campaign was carried out at Sakya institution, Drepung nunnery and Mindrolling monastery in Clementtown. Monitoring and evaluation of the field program

was carried out to assess the quality of the health services catered under the program.



The Hepatitis screening, vaccination and follow-up test program was funded by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).

Screening and Vaccination of Hepatitis B&C in Remote Areas of Tenzingang

The Tibetan Primary Health Centre, Miao, under the supervision of the Department of Health (DOHe), continued the Hepatitis screening and vaccination campaign in the remote areas under the jurisdiction of Tenzingang Settlement. The team led by Executive Secretary Mr Lhawang conducted Hepatitis B and C screening at Gacham, Tawang, Dirang and Rama camps.



After the completion of the screening and vaccination campaign at Tenzingang and Bomdila, the team visited Tawang, Dirang and Rama, following which health awareness talks were arranged in the respective visiting places.

Detailed tests will be carried out for Tibetans tested positive during the screening, in the following months. The campaign was funded by PRM (US).

Integration and Telemedicine staff visited to the Central Zone

Integration and Telemedicine staff of the DOHe Dr Tsering Tsamchoe visited three Tibetan settlements namely Odhisha, Mainpat and Bhandara from 2 May to 16 May 2023. These are Tibetan settlements situated in Central part of India.



During the visit, Dr. Tsering Tsamchoe met with executive secretaries, field doctors and nurses from both sorig and allopathic fields. Following the visit, an integration subcommittee was created in the visiting settlements. These committees are meant to work towards enhancing community health by promoting disease prevention and awareness programs. The patients will be recommended sorig or allopathic doctor, according to the needs of the patients.



Ms. Pema Tsering visited the clinic in the Bhandara settlement to assess the effectiveness of telemedicine services. She interviewed patients who had been availing the services to hear their thoughts and get further recommendations. The visit's main goals included assessing the accuracy of the data entered into the DHIS2 system and identifying significant health gaps, developing interventions.

Tibetans in Dharamshala and Settlements Observed World Hypertension Day



Tibetan in Dharamshala and settlements spread across India observed World Hypertension Day on 17 May 2023. In accordance with the International Hypertension Day theme titled 'Measure your blood pressure accurately and control it, live longer', health centers in Tibetan settlements carried out various activities i.e. awareness talks, free health check-ups, etc. in schools and settlements.

In Dharamsala, TibetTV broadcasted a panel discussion on Hypertension with a guest panel Dr Sonam Topgyal from Delek Hospital.

Mental Health Monitoring Team Visited Tibetan Settlements in South India

From 25 April to 12 May 2023, DOHe mental health dealing staff Ms.Tenzin Chondhen along with Telepsychiatry coordinator Sherab Tsomo and Intern Sonam Dolma visited four Tibetan settlements where Telepsychiatry project is being undertaken in collaboration with Sangath, Goa.

The DOHe team was joined by 3-member team-Dr Abhijit Nadkarni, Kedar Mirchandani and Urvita Bhatia, from Sangath. The team assessed the feasibility and acceptability of Telepsychiatry by the Tibetans settled in Mundgod and Bylakuppe.

The visiting team interacted and exchanged views and received feedback from relevant field nurses. Furthermore, voices from the beneficiaries and their families were received during the field visit. The assessment revealed an encouraging feedback that the project-

Telepsychiatry service has benefited the patients in receiving timely medical intervention.



The monitoring visit also consisted of a separate mental health awareness session. The session was attended by 59 community leaders and 468 community members. The visiting team also conducted an awareness talk to students in schools located in the respective five settlements. A total of 531 students joined the awareness talk program.

The program was funded by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).

Virtual Talk on ‘Anxiety and Stress Management’



The mental health desk of the DOHe organised a virtual talk on ‘Anxiety and stress management’ on 7 May 2023.

Dr Kunga Norzom presented a talk on mental health. The mental health dealing staff from DOHe, Tibetan primary health care centers, field nurses and school counsellors attended the virtual talk. Around 104 participants took part in the talk. The talk session was followed by a question and answer session.

Telemedicine Awareness Campaigns in Three Tibetan Settlements

In April 2023, DOHe conducted a Telemedicine awareness campaign in Primary health care centers in Miao, Ravangla and Bhandara.



The campaign aimed to boost public awareness and knowledge on benefits of Telemedicine, and the health services available under the telemedicine. Under this project, underserved Tibetan communities are targeted to ensure affordable and equitable access to health services.

Hepatitis B & C Screening and Vaccination for Tibetans in Tenzingang settlement

The Department of Health currently undertakes phase IV of the Hepatitis B and C awareness, screening and vaccinations campaign. Under the campaign, from 8 to 11 May 2023, DOHe conducted free Hepatitis screening and vaccination camp for Tibetans in Tenzingang Settlement. In addition to Tenzingang, Tibetan settlements in Mandi, Mundgod, Bhandara, Kullu and Delhi were also covered under this vaccination drive.



An additional testing and medical examination were conducted for those tested positive and people with negative results were vaccinated with three complete doses.

A total of 27060 people received free screening and a free vaccination to the negative patients. These were made possible with funding from the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM, US).

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Immunisation Drive

The Department of Health started a mass immunization drive for schoolgirls in Upper TCV, Sambota Tibetan School Peteon, Tibetan Home Foundation Rajpur and Deckyiling on 1st May 2023.

Infections with the human papillomavirus (HPV) are the major factor of cervical cancer and cancer-related deaths in women worldwide. The HPV vaccine is widely used against the strains of HPV that are most likely to cause genital warts or cervical cancer. The DOHe aims to immunize entire female students from grades 7 to 12 in Tibetan schools started from the schools in Northern India.



Based on the recommendation by WHO and National Cancer Institute, minimum one shot of HPV vaccine was arranged. Till date, a total of 219 girls received HPV vaccination.

Three-day Field Visit to Shimla Tibetan Settlement Office

DOHe staff, Ms Kelsang Chodon accompanied by Ms Pema Tsering, visited Tibetan settlement in Shimla from 21 to 23 April 2023. The field visit was carried out to undertake a health screening

project under the Mother and Child, Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal and Adolescence (MCHRMNA) desk of the DOHe.



A total of 23 girls from Sambota Tibetan School in Shimla received health screening on anemia during the visit. Furthermore, a session on anemia and an overview of RMNCHA programs were delivered in the STS school.

Health Department Held an Internal Administrative Meeting



The Department of Health held an internal administrative virtual meeting on April 21 2023. The meeting was presided by Secretary Mr Dawa Tsultrim and joined by Additional Secretary Mr Jampa Phuntso, Joint Secretary Mrs Dekyi Dolkar and Mrs Tsering Youdon and section heads of the department. From the field health centers, the meeting was attended by Executive Secretaries of the Tibetan Health Care centers spread across Tibetan settlements in India and the Director of the Ngoenga Special School.

The meeting covered a wide range of administrative agendas including budgeting, public health care, preventive health related actions and projects. Furthermore, the meeting aimed to discuss and understand administrative issues and challenges. Secretary Dawa Tsultrim encouraged the Executive Secretaries to share the challenges and issues faced within the health centers on daily basis.

Mental Health Desk of the Health Department initiated A “Self-Love” event



In collaboration with Chisem Foundation, mental health desk of the DOHe organised an event titled “self-love” on 14 April 2023 in Delhi. The event was targeted for young people to inspire and develop a healthy sense of self-love. Furthermore, the event helped the participants to identify and recognize strengths and limitations and taught the value of being kind to oneself and their own mental health.

The guest speakers for the event were Professor Dr Itisha from Delhi University; certified therapist Mrs Tenzin Dawa and Ms Ngoshi Choedon. The speakers shared their personal insights and conducted participatory activities that encouraged the participants to speak freely without hesitation. Around 90 Tibetans and local Indians took part in the event.

The program was funded by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).

Open Marathon in Dharamshala and World Health Day activities in Tibetan Settlements across India



On April 7, the Department of Health organized an open marathon in Dharamshala to promote physical exercises. Over 101 participants took part in the marathon with cash prizes ranging from rupees 500 to 5000. The first prize holder received rupees 5000 followed by 3500 for the second and 2000 for the third winner. The next top ten participants also received cash prize of rupees 500 each as a consolation.

Similarly, Tibetans across the settlements marked the day by holding a marathon and various other health-related awareness activities. Furthermore, in collaboration with TibetTV, DOHe organized a panel discussion on nutrition and health with Dr Maria Bianca. The panel discussion was widely shared on various social media platforms.

Psycho-social Rehabilitation Program across Tibetan Settlements

The Mental Health desk of the DOHe initiated a psycho-social rehabilitation program across Tibetan communities in India. The initiative aimed to promote mental health awareness and provide support for individuals and families with mental health issues.



The program was implemented in 8 Tibetan settlements participated by 122 Tibetans (67 females and 55 males) including family members of the mental health patients. The program was led by executive secretaries and medical practitioners in the respective settlements, with close coordination and support from Tibetan settlement officers, Tibetan Cooperative Society, Regional Tibetan Women Associations and Camp leaders.

The interactive program facilitated the participants to engage in experience sharing and

bringing out a mutual support system to better understand each other's predicament and most importantly to enable them to feel a sense of belongingness rather than being stigmatized. This approach also focused on psycho-educating the family members by the psychiatrists and Geshes to best support the mental illness individuals both psychologically and spiritually.

The program was made possible with support from the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).

26th Governing Body Meeting of the Tibetan Voluntary Health Association (TVHA)



On 30th March 2023, the 26th Governing Body Meeting of the Tibetan Voluntary Health Association (TVHA) for the financial year 2022-23 was held at DOHe's Kalon cabin. The meeting was presided by Hon'ble Sikyong Penpa Tsering, Health Kalon and Chairman of the Society. The meeting was called abiding the Section III, sub-section 7(B/ix) of the Society's Rules and Regulations and Section 19 of sub-section (1) of the Himachal Pradesh Societies Registration Act, 2006.

The Governing Body unanimously adopted a total of 9 agendas including approval of the interim budget for the financial year 2022-2023 and the annual budget with an estimated total receipt of INR 270,700,478 and an estimated total payment of INR 367,767,712 for the financial year 2023-2024 along with TVHA 2022-2023 annual activity report.

Project sites Assessments and TMS Awareness in Shimla

On March 20, 2023, TMS Program Officer Ms. Pema Youdon along with WASH Project Officer Ms Sonam Dolma and TMS staff Mr Sangye Dhondup visited Tibetan settlement in Shimla.



During the visit, the TMS program officer and deputy secretary Ms Pema Youdon, presented an overall performance of TMS and emphasised the importance and benefits of enrolling in TMS. The presentation was followed by a Q&A session. She along with the project staff paid a visit to project sites under WASH program.

Three-Day Orientation on TVHA-Integrated Health Information System

DOHe conducted a three-day orientation cum training on the pilot initiative of TVHA-Integrated Health Information System (TMAI-Sowa Rigpa) at Men-Tsee-Khang from March-2 to 4 along with HISP India. The training attendees included clinicians of TMAI Gangkyi and Mcleod Branch Clinics.



The training aimed for easy coordination, collection, processing and reporting of data from health facilities which are not directly administered by the DOHe, to build a comprehensive and robust health surveillance/information system of the exiled Tibetan community. The training was funded by USAID.

The Department of Health in collaboration with HISP India developed an Integrated Health Information System (HIS) for TMAI.

World Cancer Day Awareness Programs Initiated by the Department of Health

The Department of Health observed World Cancer Day on February 4 by initiating several cancer related public awareness programs.



To spread awareness and engage with the community, DOHe in collaboration with Tibet TV, hosted a panel discussion with panels Dr Ugen Gyatso from Delek Hospital and Dr Tsering Tsamchoe from DOHe. Furthermore, DOHe launched two short videos encompassing cancer related health issues messages from the incumbent Health Kalon Penpa Tsering, in addition to messages from allopathy and Sorig Tibetan doctors and nurses. Customized pens with cancer awareness messages were also distributed to CTA, LTWA, and Dropen Men-Tse-Khang staff.

Furthermore, DOHe and the Tibetan Cancer Society organized Cancer awareness talk to the staff of the CTA. The guest speakers during the

talk comprised of the Director of Tibetan Cancer Society Mr Tsultrim Dorjee; His Holiness the Dalai Lama's personal physician Dr Tsetan Dorjee and Medical Oncologist of Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute Dr Manish Sharma.

Director of Tibetan Cancer Society Mr Tsultrim Dorjee gave an introductory remark highlighting aims and objectives of the Tibetan Cancer Society. Following which, Dr Tsetan Dorjee spoke on cancer within the Tibetan community and he also emphasized the importance of early detection and prevention which would save many lives from cancer deaths. Dr Manish Sharma shed light on two types of risk factors of Cancer i.e., preventable and non-preventable risk factors.

On the same day Tibetan Cancer Society conducted free health check-ups like blood pressure, Hemoglobin (HB) tests, Electrocardiography (ECG), Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) and sugar tests for the staffs of CTA, Dharamsala.

Furthermore, all hospitals and clinics across the Tibetan settlements observed the day through various activities by arranging public awareness talks, quiz and drawing competitions in schools, breast self-examination in nunneries and free health check-ups for HPylori, mammography and Pap smear tests.

Secretary of the Health Department Meets MBBS Students



On the 25th of January 2023, Secretary Dawa Tsultrim met with MBBS interns and students from Dharamshala based Dr Rajendra Prasad Government Medical College and Hospital, Tanda. During the meeting, the secretary emphasized and reminded about the importance of the reserved seats category through which the students were able to get admission into the medical line. He further encouraged the students to be able to contribute back to the community and applauded them for their hard work.

Tibetan Medicare System (TMS) enrollment for the year 2023-2024

Enrollment for 2023-2024 TMS membership started on 1st January 2023 and closed on 31 March 2023. Unlike past years, the DOHe increased the coverage of TMS maximum limit from 120,000 INR to 150,000 INR for a household plan and 60,000 INR to 75,000 INR to for an individual plan. Similarly, TMS premium was increased from 3900 INR to 4300 INR for the household plan and 900 INR to 1100 INR for individual premium plan. This year, 24190 Tibetans in India were enrolled under TMS.



To ensure an easy access and equitable health care support for the all Tibetans in India, DOHe provide subsidized TMS premium for monks and nuns, Tibetans arrived from Tibet after 1994 and Tibetans in nomadic and underserved areas, families with disabled Tibetans and construction workers.

The TMS benefit period covers from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 and it renews after every year.