



# Annual Report 2024/2025

TOGETHER FOR EQUALITY, VISIBILITY, AND EMPOWERMENT



**What started as a heartfelt personal commitment has grown into a vibrant and growing community.**

The first major event organized by DHAGPO SWITZERLAND in 2022 in Männedorf/Zürich, laid the foundation for our initiative. At this special occasion with Jigme Rinpoche, the European representative of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Thaye Dorje, we raised our first donations for the temple roof of Karma Chokhor Dechen Nunnery in Rumtek, Sikkim (India).

Since 2021, I have been visiting the nunnery annually, personally delivering donations, spending time with the abbess Ani Tsultrim and the nuns, and experiencing their daily life. These visits continue to show how vital concrete, local support truly is.

Why? Across much of Asia, Buddhist nuns still face structural disadvantages — whether in education, living conditions, or financial support. To this day, they remain largely invisible in public life, and they are given less influence in spiritual matters than the monks.

In January 2024, we therefore founded the *Rumtek Nuns Circle of Friends*, to share our insights, foster international exchange, and inform and inspire others. The nunnery is under the spiritual guidance of His Holiness Gyalwa Karmapa, who, in interviews with us (March 2024, March 2025), encouraged us to continue advocating for resources and equality for the nuns.

## What you'll find here

- A glimpse into our ongoing work and the current situation at the nunnery
- Information about the new “Happy School” program, led by our secular teacher Dechen
- A heartfelt invitation to meet Ani Tsultrim and members of our network in person during the Dharma Week with Jigme Rinpoche, August 30 – September 4, 2025 in Männedorf/Zürich, organized by DHAGPO SWITZERLAND



# What's Happened Since Spring 2024

## September 2024

### Major event hosted by DHAGPO SWITZERLAND in Männedorf/Zürich

A full Dharma week with Jigme Rinpoche. *The Rumtek Nuns Circle of Friends* presented their work with a short film and talk. Simona and Frank Scheer offered hand-made Tsa Tsas at our fundraising stand. We also had the chance to connect with Pia and Peter Cervený from the Karmapa Healthcare Project (KHCP), and we're looking forward to future collaboration, which they too warmly welcomed.

## October 2024

### Visit to Switzerland by Ani Tsultrim

After visiting her brother, Ani Tsultrim went hiking for the first time in the Bernese Oberland — and taught us how to make momos! On October 6, she introduced the nunnery to the DHAGPO BERN Sangha, and we practiced Chenrezig together.

## November 2024

### Children's Day celebration at the Rumtek Nunnery

A joyful annual event filled with games, dancing, cake, and small gifts — it's always a very special and happy day for everyone!

## December 2024

### Kagyu Mönlam in Bodhgaya with His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Thaye Dorje

Ani Tsultrim and a group of nuns once again traveled to Bodhgaya for the Kagyu Mönlam — one of the most important annual events in India with His Holiness Gyalwa Karmapa.

## February 2025

### Losar – Tibetan New Year in Rumtek

As every year, the nuns gathered for ten days of intensive Mahakala pujas (protector practices). Until the new temple is complete, only 16 of the approximately 30 nuns can practice together in the small temporary shrine room.

## March 2025

### Annual visit to the Rumtek Nunnery

As always, shared practice, meals, and deep conversation were incredibly moving. Ani Tsultrim, her deputy Sherab, and their teacher Dechen do truly admirable work!

Thanks to your donations, we were able to support the expansion of the school program, Dechen's annual salary and a three-year retreat for the nuns Jangchub and Rangdrol with Sherab Gyaltzen. Both nuns will receive traditional transmissions and training and plan to pass on their retreat experiences to the younger nuns in the monastery.

# Meeting With Gyalwa Karmapa

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**March 16, 2025 –**

**Interview with His Holiness Gyalwa Karmapa at KIBI (New Delhi, India)**

For the first time, Ani Tsultrim and Fabienne Berlinger had the opportunity to meet personally with the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa and show him recent photos documenting the poor condition of the nunnery.

The kitchen, for example, is far too small for 30 nuns and has only four basic stovetops. There is no dining room, and the sanitary facilities are in a very poor state. The roof of the main building urgently needs to be repaired and sealed before the monsoon season. The oldest building – used for storage, tormo preparation, two bedrooms, and the temporary shrine room – must be demolished and rebuilt entirely. Gyalwa Karmapa was visibly moved and identified the kitchen renovation as the first priority, clearly recognizing that shared cooking and meals are essential to a healthy monastic community.

We also discussed the idea of inviting nuns to accompany him on a future visit to Europe, and the possibility of improving educational opportunities – for example, creating a nuns' Shedra (monastic college) in Kalimpong. He noted that such changes would require initiative not only from the nuns themselves, but also from the monks and teachers. Cultural and social habits change slowly, he said – but at the same time, he reaffirmed his strong wish for greater support, visibility, and equality for the nuns.



# Happy School Program

## Happy School Program – Empowerment from within

From August 2024 to May 2025, Dechen, the secular teacher at the Rumtek Nunnery, participated in the international online program “Happy School”, initiated by Lama Irene (Dorje Dreulma). Thanks to the support of our *Rumtek Nuns Circle of Friends*, we were able to provide Dechen with a laptop and internet access. Adriana, a former teacher herself, had completed the same program and stayed in regular contact with Dechen — offering guidance that became a valuable source of coaching and encouragement.

“Happy School” is a holistic, English-language curriculum for educators worldwide. It strengthens social and emotional competencies in school systems — for students, teachers, and the broader school environment. The content is structured around four key areas:

- Awareness of education as a whole system
- Self-care and self-reflection
- Mindful relationships and compassion
- Responsibility for nature, society, and the greater good

Through weekly video inputs, reading materials, and Zoom exchanges with participants from diverse cultural backgrounds, the program creates dynamic learning spaces that cross both cultural and spiritual boundaries.  
<https://www.elihw.org>

### Dechen shares:

“I’m deeply grateful to the *Rumtek Nuns Circle of Friends* — not only for the technical support but also for the encouragement to take part in the program. I’ve learned that self-care is not selfish; it’s the foundation for being there for others — with patience, inner strength, and compassion. More than ever, I understand that teachers embody values. They are role models in a world that is often challenging. I want to offer my students stability, mindfulness, and the courage to grow into who they truly are.”

### Making an Impact – Shaping the Future

Dechen’s participation in the Happy School program is already having a noticeable impact on daily life at the nunnery. Her new insights are enriching not only the classroom but also helping to build the emotional and spiritual resilience of the young nuns. Together, we are creating spaces for growth, inner strength, and compassion!



# A Warm Invitation To You All!



**Dharma Week with Jigme Rinpoche**  
**August 30 – September 4, 2025 in Männedorf / Zürich**  
[https://dhagpo-switzerland.ch/jigme-rinpoche\\_2025/](https://dhagpo-switzerland.ch/jigme-rinpoche_2025/)

This summer, Ani Tsultrim will be joining the Dharma Week for the very first time – as a special guest at the event organized by DHAGPO SWITZERLAND.  
A wonderful opportunity to meet her in person!

On the weekend of August 30–31, we'll be showing a short film (filmed in March 2025) about the current situation at the Rumtek Nunnery – and we'll be present throughout the week with a fundraising stand.



*If you'd like to join the "Friends of the Rumtek Nuns", or be added to our Signal group (where we share monthly updates from the nunnery), just send us an email:  
[rumtek.nonnen@dhagpo-switzerland.ch](mailto:rumtek.nonnen@dhagpo-switzerland.ch)*

*Feel free to tell others about the Rumtek Nuns, our Friends Circle, and our vision for better conditions on all levels. Energy flows where attention goes!*

*Learn more about our work and how to donate:  
[www.dhagpo-switzerland.ch/freundeskreis-nonnen](http://www.dhagpo-switzerland.ch/freundeskreis-nonnen)*

## **Your Contribution Matters!**

*Instead of birthday or Christmas gifts, you could ask for donations for the nunnery.  
Or get creative:*

- – Bake cakes
- – Knit socks
- – Sell something at a local market
- – Organize a concert
- – Repair bikes and donate the proceeds...

*With your ideas, wishes, words, actions, or donations, you help create fairer conditions for the nuns – and take part in shaping a cultural shift toward greater equality.  
Thank you for your support – together, we're turning vision into reality!*

*With warmest wishes to you all – and heartfelt thanks to Barbara Mieg for shaping this report.*

*Fabienne Berlinger  
Board Member, DHAGPO SWITZERLAND/ Founder, Rumtek Nuns Circle of Friends*