IMPACT GRANTEE
Zero TB in Tibetan Kids

THE CHALLENGE

Tibetan refugee children living in India suffer from tuberculosis (TB) at an astounding rate 12 times higher than that of Indian children. Alliance for a Healthier World researchers are addressing this critical health-equity challenge with innovative approaches in diagnostics, therapeutics, and patient education to create the most effective strategies for eliminating TB among refugee children in Dharamsala, India.

OUR RESEARCH TEAM APPROACH TO SOLVING

Using a Global-to-Local approach, our team will leverage Johns Hopkins University faculty expertise in the areas of health communications, health economics, psycho-educational counseling, and TB control and treatment in partnership with local stakeholders to conduct school-based screenings and implement novel drug regimens.

The cutting-edge methods include:

- Point-of-care molecular testing for TB
- Novel short-course treatment for latent TB
- The use of social media, apps, and e-learning to facilitate mobilization, education, and communication

Collaboration Across Sectors

This approach was designed through a collaboration between Johns Hopkins schools of Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, Business, Education, and Arts & Sciences. Our researchers are partnering with the Tibetan Delek Hospital and the Tibetan community in India.

The project has the full support of His Holiness the Dalai Lama; political leaders from the Central Tibetan Administration; the

HEALTHIER WORLD IMPACT GRANT PROGRAM

The Alliance for a Healthier World awarded four $250,000 Impact Grants in 2018 to Johns Hopkins University initiatives that address critical areas of global health equity. The $1 million investment supports cross-divisional teams at JHU representing biomedical, engineering, education, arts and sciences, and business divisions across the campus to advance their proposed transformative contributions. The JHU teams are partnering with local community-based organizations and public-sector entities to ensure community involvement and to expand the long-term benefits of research projects in low- and middle-income countries and in First Nations communities throughout their lives.

Unleashing the full range of scientific, analytic, and creative capabilities to resolve the most complex global health equity challenges of our time.
Ministries of Health and Education; the Tibetan Children’s Villages; and the larger Tibetan community.

A substantial proportion of Tibetan children in India attend boarding schools for educational, spiritual, and cultural instruction. The schools, largely supported by charitable donations, provide a nurturing environment, good nutrition, and a rigorous curriculum. However, children live in dormitories and hostels with up to 40 children per room or dormitory, often in over-crowded conditions. During harsh Himalayan winters, ventilation is not optimal, thus increasing the transmission of TB. This multidisciplinary collaboration represents the unification of global experts to address a major health inequity faced by a vulnerable refugee population. This initiative is potentially scalable and sustainable for the Tibetan population not just in Dharamsala but across India. Results from this project will inform policy and action at the national and global level, which is significant because current screening and treatment related to latent TB are largely insufficient despite the proven benefit of TB preventive therapy.

Colleagues from the Zero TB in Tibetan Kids team, led by principal investigator, Richard Chaisson (6th from left) and co-investigator, Kunchok Dorjee (1st on left). Photo credit: Zero TB in Tibetan Kids team.