

Supporting access to education in Ladakh Region (Northern India)

In September 2022, INOKS Capital provided a USD \$15,000 grant to fund scholarships of 25 children in the Ladakh Region (Northern India) for youth from marginalised ethnic groups, in particular young girls, who noticeably struggle with access to basic education. The grant will cover total yearly school costs (tuition fees, transport, accommodation & food, technology, laboratory, and co-curricular activities) noting that these expenses represent a high financial burden for students' families, whose average household income stands below USD700 per year. The children will attend the Druk Padma Karpo School, founded in 2001 to provide a holistic curriculum integrating contemporary knowledge and indigenous wisdom of the region. Since the Himalayas face extreme effects of global warming including cloudbursts and flash floods, the school features award-winning sustainable design to mitigate flood and earthquake risks. Its design, by the Arup Group, won the BBC World's Most Beautiful School Award, the Best Green Building Award, the Emirates Glass LEAF Award 2012, among many others. Today, the school is 887 students and 1,000+ alumni strong.



The founder of the school, His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa, is also the founder of the Kung Fu Nuns which is an inspiring organization whereby nuns from the Himalayas have started to learn Kung Fu to build their inner and outer strength and are now empowering youth and girls of the Himalayas to champion gender equality, physical fitness, environmentally friendly ways of living, and respect for all living beings through Kung Fu training and other actions. Each year the Nuns perform an Eco-Pad Yatras of thousands of kilometres by foot to pick up plastic waste and educate locals on respecting the environment. They also travel by bicycle to the most remote, vulnerable villages in the Himalayas to fight against human trafficking (families selling off their girls) by raising awareness among the local communities, teaching girls how to defend themselves and helping them attend school. The Kung Fu Nuns also teach self-defence at the Druk Padma Karpo School.

The Kung Fu Nuns work as on-ground partners with Live to Love International to identify and address challenges affecting the people of Ladakh. One such challenge is the economic development of the region. To tackle it, community leaders partnered with Live to Love International to launch The Naropa Fellowship, a one-year graduate program with a view to teaching post graduate students from the local communities to develop social enterprises. The aim is to develop grassroots solutions to global problems and boost the local ecosystem to provide job opportunities in the Ladakh region. The Fellowship boasts 181 graduates over 3 graduating classes and has already launched 78 social enterprises. As a further step, INOKS Capital intends to support alumni by providing seed funding to develop and scale their activity. Our team is currently working on the organisation of a pitching session to select outstanding and innovative start-up entrepreneurs.