



karuna
shechen

altruism
in action

LETTER TO OUR FRIENDS

Let's share our altruistic drive

HOPE

Editorial

BY MATTHIEU RICARD
FOUNDER AND HONORARY PRESIDENT

In a time of socio-economic declines, ecological emergencies, and humanitarian crises, one may ask "How can anyone have hope?" We intend to rephrase this question into an intention: "because we can see a change that we can make in the world."

Hope is an unshakable necessity within the heart of Karuna-Shechen. Our shared belief that things will change, no matter the challenge, is embedded in the Buddhist idea of impermanence. By recognizing the transience of something, we can recognize our capacity to act and change it.

Hope is not passive optimism. It means bearing witness to the pain of our time, taking nothing away from the fullness of what has been carried, but nonetheless choosing to act for the possibility of an alternative and better future. As we stand, this future is unknown, but through hope we can see the value of a story not yet written.

And this journey is not undertaken alone. Hope is the act that reconnects us. We cannot allow our despair to turn us inwards but must allow ourselves to be sent into the arms of others. In Karuna-Shechen our commitment is collective, united by our actions. This letter shares these actions as stories of hope from our community. Composed from the voices of volunteers, colleagues, donors, and partner communities, it is a testament to how our strength lies in our solidarity.

So, thank you for joining us and supporting us on rewriting the story of our time. It is through our shared spirit that we create a new possible.

TESTIMONY

“ I deeply believe that Karuna's projects foster hope. When I had the chance to meet directly with the communities we partner with, I remember one man who stood up and said : "Karuna-Shechen helped us reach the first step, the one that seemed too high, and now, we as a community can run up the stairs". His words really captured the hope that we try to bring, not as solution-providers, but as partners and supporters.»

Marilou Mourgues
Field Support Officer





Hope, a necessary commitment

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN JANE GOODALL AND MATTHIEU RICARD

Matthieu Ricard: Jane Goodall passed away in October 2025. Though the world celebrated ninety-one years of a beautiful life, her departure from this world felt far too soon. I often think of her, of her singular blend of gentle presence and iron-willed determination to bring more goodness, hope, and wisdom into the world. Just before we went online for our exchange, she said to me, «I have missed you.» Well, we all miss you, dearly. May our various endeavours help carry your vision forward.

What follows are excerpts from a conversation we had in 2021, about hope — and the threads that bind it to altruism and wonder.

J.G. It is my opinion that if we lose hope, we are doomed. For, if you don't think your actions are going to make any difference, or that all your efforts are going to fail, why bother?

M.R. Yes, our mutual friend Yann Arthus-Bertrand said that it is too late to be pessimistic: if we lose hope, then what will happen? Losing hope means not lifting a finger! This means not making important decisions.

J.G. And you know Matthieu, the fact remains that the world is in a bad state, no one can deny it. When people say "Jane, you can't really have hope," I answer that "it depends how you define hope." I see us in a dark tunnel and at the end of that tunnel there is a glimmer of light. That's hope. But you can't sit back and say, "Oh, I hope to reach the end of the tunnel." No, you have to roll up your sleeves, crawl under, climb over, and work your way around all the obstacles that stand between you and this light. So, for me hope is action. It leads to action. Because if you are hopeful that you can do something to make a difference, then you do it.

M.R. I would like to bring another notion very close to hope, and that is the notion of wonderment. What brings you wonderment brings respect: you are not going to destroy a beautiful, natural forest or the beautiful beings who live there if you have respect for them, because your respect leads to the feeling of being concerned and of caring, which leads to action. So, in a way, wonderment is constructive; just like hope, it gives a sense of elevation.

J.G. What emerges there for me is the most important word: respect. I come back to children again and again because once they understand the issues and we empower them to take action and help them, they change the world! In «Roots and Shoots» [a Jane Goodall Institute's youth-led global community action program], our members, from preschoolers to university students, choose three projects themselves: one to help people, one to help animals, and one to help the environment. And they learn respect: for animals, for nature, and for our common humanity.

M.R. And tied to all this is altruism. Just like hope, altruism can seem utopian: How can you have hope when the situation is so terrible, and how can you be altruistic when everyone lives to be selfish? The major challenges of our time operate across three different timescales: short, medium, and long-term. There are those of immediate concern, then those that will impact throughout our lifetime, and those that risk many future generations and the eight million other species who are our co-citizens in this world. Selfishness at the service of the economy will not solve these challenges. We must cultivate altruism alongside our hope and wonderment. It is the only pragmatic answer, as it is the thread that can reconcile the needs of these three timescales.





Building the pathway to a better future, together

DINESH DHOBI, 21 YEAR-OLD COMPASSION MOTIVATOR FROM SULTANPUR IN KAPILVASTU, NEPAL

Better Future Councils (BFCs) foster hope through empowered connection. Guided by the principle that people deserve the dignity to make their own decisions, and are best placed to do so, the councils are a cluster of pairs of men and women elected from 2 to 10 villages. Representing nearly 5,000 people, with two compassion motivators acting as intermediaries to strengthen community links, the councils work as equal partners with Karuna-Shechen to identify and prioritise problems.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT BFCs AND YOUR ROLE AS A COMPASSION MOTIVATOR?

BFCs are about uplifting lives, starting with individuals, then households, then communities, and moving up to the ward, the district, and even the nation. The goal is simple but powerful: to make lives better by building awareness, responsibility, and action from within the community. As a Compassion Motivator, I spend time with the community. I observe, listen, and help people reflect on their challenges and possibilities. The intention is not to impose change, but to inspire it, so that people find the will to act on their own. The BFC Initiative gives the community a voice, and power to turn their concerns into action.

WHY DID YOU WANT TO VOLUNTEER IN THIS ROLE?

I come from a very marginalized, underserved community. Our lives have often been overlooked. That has made me want to stand up and do something, to bring change from within. I go to college in the morning then afterward, I visit different communities to monitor ongoing work. I watch how change is happening, step by step, every day. It's inspiring.

HOW DO YOU BELIEVE THE BFCs BRING HOPE TO THE COMMUNITY?

BFCs provide people with knowledge. Once they are aware, they begin to act, and that builds both accountability and confidence as they can break free from deep-rooted beliefs and open the doors to new ways of thinking and living. People are slowly seeing the changes and that gives them hope as it proves that things can get better.

WHAT IS YOUR HOPE?

Hope means knowing that where we are today isn't our final destination. In my work I help people to understand their own reality. Once they understand their situation, they believe things can improve and they have hope.

SELECTED EXTRACTS FROM OUR IMPACT IN 2025



20,830
PEOPLE

have access to safe
drinkable water



374
SMALL BUSINESSES
supported



7,368
CHILDREN
and teenagers supported
in their schooling



60,210
PATIENTS
cared for

Restoring health, hope and dignity

AWARENESS : THE PATH TO A FUTURE WITHOUT PAIN



Karuna-Shechen's holistic approach restores health, hope and dignity : we combine affordable quality care - through our clinics and mobile clinics - with awareness programs, so that the communities can take control over their own health. It can cover many topics : menstrual health or maternal and child health for instance.

“The Health Awareness Program is important in bridging the healthcare gap in rural areas. It contributes to improved health outcomes and increased confidence by empowering community members to make informed decisions, adopt healthy practices, and seek medical care when needed. By providing accurate information, promoting healthy practices and offering support, we share the knowledge, skills and resources to empower communities to take control of their health. This, in turn, gives them hope for a better future.»

Shreya Rai, Coordinator as part of the Darjeeling district Program (India)

THE POWER OF CARE



Deependra Panta, Program Manager of Health and Hygiene in Nepal, shares how hope means stepping into our power to care.

“My greatest inspiration comes from seeing the smiles of community members and their positive responses as a result of our interventions, especially when we reach those in utmost need. I find happiness in seeing the small powerful transformations that enable people to regain their health, confidence, and hope.

Hope is the possibility of a better life; it is the belief that change is possible, even in the most difficult circumstances. Hope shapes how I approach my responsibilities. I plan and implement programs not just as tasks to improve health,

but for the opportunity to restore dignity and uplift the lives of the community people. My team and I directly address the real needs of the community by listening to their stories, understanding their challenges, and bringing practical and sustainable actions to their lives. We remind them that change is possible, that their lives can improve and that they are not alone. I see hope reflected in the eyes of a mother who receives antenatal care for the first time, in the smile of a woman who can walk without pain after a uterine prolapse surgery, or in the renewed confidence of someone who can see again after a cataract surgery.»

Deependra Panta, Program Manager of Health and Hygiene in Nepal

Education : our basis for hope

A BRIGHTER FUTURE : ASMITA TAMANG, PRINCIPAL AND ECD FACILITATOR AT KHARSA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Karuna-Shechen's mission to meet communities' basic needs, empower people and strengthen community life begins with investing in the quality education of children. An inadequate access to education, known as 'learning poverty', embeds the inequalities that start early in life. We act to give young children the best opportunity to reach their potential, fostering hope in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) classes and Babuas dropout schools. These programs create learning conditions that support future professional opportunities while promoting fundamental equality and autonomy.

“ I was born and raised in Kharsa. In fact, I studied in this very school as a child. It feels special to now be leading it. My journey with Karuna-Shechen began when the organization decided to support the construction of Kharsa School. That moment marked the start of our partnership.

ECD is the foundation of education. It focuses on the all-round development of young children, their learning, behaviour, creativity, and social skills. If children are given this strong base between the ages of three and five, their future learning becomes smoother and

their results much better. Their future will definitely be brighter. It builds practical habits, confidence, and behaviour from the start. Every day feels lively and filled with energy, learning through play is at the heart of it.

The ECD program is important for the children and the community because it changes children's behaviour, supports their overall growth, and even influences parents' attitudes. It helps not just children, but also the community, move forward. In my work, hope means seeing children's learning outcomes improve. That is what gives me strength. I try to share this hope by sitting with parents and the community in meetings, and by working daily with the children. In every small activity, I try to pass on the belief that things can improve.

My greatest hope is that they grow into good human beings, practical, responsible, and socially aware. I would like them to live meaningful lives and contribute back to society. That is my hope, and my faith.»



RESTORING HOPE

In India, underprivileged children are out-of-school due to being in remote communities where they have no access to government schools or due to low income backgrounds where education is not a priority. Intended for children aged 5-14 who have either never attended school or who have dropped out, Babua schools provide access to quality education for free. The schools create an enjoyable and holistic learning environment, through quality teaching, to prepare children for enrollment in formal schools and progression through their education.

Chandani has been attending the Babua school in Habibpur for some time now, and it has become a very important part of her life. Her grandmother had been searching for a good school nearby, but there were no government or private schools in our area. One of their neighbours sends their child to Babua School, which is run by Karuna-Shechen, and that's how her grandmother found out about it and got her admitted.

“ There are many things I enjoy about school. I love learning new things, reciting poems, drawing, and playing with my friends. We all sit together during break time and play different types of games. It makes me very happy.

In the beginning, I didn't want to come to school. I felt scared and shy. But now, I attend school every day, and I like it a lot. Sometimes I find it hard to write neatly or remember numbers, but my teacher helps me with patience. I try again and again until I learn. Coming to Babua School has made me happy. I have learned so many new things. I want to continue learning and do something good when I grow up. One day, I hope to study in a big school and make my family proud.»

Chandani, 6 years old



A renewed confidence

RESPECT, CARE AND AGENCY : THE GO GREEN INITIATIVE

Karuna-Shechen builds awareness through education and empowers people to act for a better relationship with the environment. Our Go Green Initiative advocates against single use plastics, sensitising students to their severe detrimental environmental effects and the possible environmentally friendly alternatives. The learnings from Go Green aim to spread beyond school boundaries, creating a cultural shift in environmental consciousness.

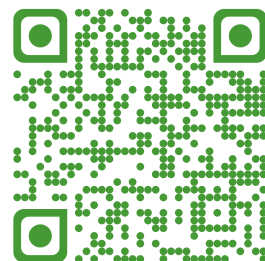
“Karuna-Shechen recently organised a Go Green program in our school to deliver the message of a greener future. Through various activities conducted by them, we learned how small steps like planting trees and reducing plastic usage can make a big difference to the environment. Since that day I have spread the information with my family members, cousins, friends and neighbours. I ask them not to use plastic bags and say how our neglect can harm the environment.”

Tusli, a 16-year-old student of Utkramit High School in Tirildih, Jharkhand



We are reminded of the power of small, committed actions that vote for a better future. We empower the students to see and be the change within the world, to act for the hope of a better relationship with the natural world through respectful practices, and we are inspired in turn by their dedication.

Scan the QR code to watch Tusli's school



H.E.L.P. AND THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF OUR HOPE

When we lose connection with others, we, in many ways, lose hope. At Karuna-Shechen, we are strengthened by our partnerships with sister organisations, with whom we co-construct projects aligned with our values and mission. Such an example is the Himalayan Environment and Life Protection (H.E.L.P.) organisation, founded by Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche. In 2022, H.E.L.P. partnered with Karuna-Shechen to launch a climate resilience program with the Samagaun and Samdo communities in the mountainous Nubri region of Nepal.

Divided into different projects, the program aims to mitigate the effects of climate change, reduce deforestation and increase local biodiversity to preserve the Himalayan ecosystem, while also creating local income opportunities to empower community autonomy and protect traditional livelihoods. One such example is the Goji Berry project where the women of the community, who are traditionally responsible for agriculture, will harvest, clean, wash and sundry the berries to sell – creating a business whose profits go directly to the

local women and the village, and builds an incentive to plant more trees. By addressing the interdependence of the climate crisis and social challenges, H.E.L.P., with support from Karuna-Shechen, acts for sustainable and holistic change.





Hope is a dream and an inner desire that motivates you to act. Karuna-Shechen is an agent of change, acting as a mediator between donors and the communities, holding the hand of each to continue the journey.

Saurav, Program Lead (India)

Hope is a mixture of intuition, innocence, and inner attitude that allows us to move forward in life with the deep conviction that there will always be an outstretched hand to grasp, a smile to welcome and a heart ready to open.

Aliette, Donor and Volunteer (Austria)

Hope is a belief that positive things will happen, no matter the challenge. It provides light in moments of uncertainty. At Karuna-Shechen we create this hope through our actions.

Trijan, Program Lead (Nepal)

Hope is a positive state of mind that inspires belief in the possibility of a better future, even in difficult situations. If we understand «Hope» in Hindi, it means «Asha,» which signifies an outcome that depends on the right understanding of using the right things at the right time. Hope is rooted in awareness, timing, and the potential of those involved.

Amit, Program Manager in Jharkhand (India)

Hope is a mindful expectation, a facet of patience. It is a path towards transformation, a light ahead.

Fabienne, Testator (France)

Hope is the betterment of the future. It spreads and grows through small activities and ignites our purpose.

Pradeep, Program Manager Food Security and Economic Development (Nepal)

While there is life, there is hope. Every day there is reason to hope - it is an innate part of life itself. Every day we can choose to act with our hearts.

Franck, Resilience Director (France)

Hope is something that you live by. It is the soul of life. It is in every facet and within everyone in the organisation and it is shared through the bond within the community.

Anyesha, Communication Lead (India)

Hope is thinking that there is a possibility that things can go well. It means focusing on what can be improved and what can be done to change reality. It is in our DNA - to choose to focus on the good part and what can be improved, choosing to fight for something.

Eva, Communication Officer (France)

Hope is light. Like the sliver of light, that silver lining of a solar eclipse. That's where hope starts, and it never ends, no matter how cloudy or seemingly dark, it shows us the way forwards. If we lose our hope, we lose our meaning in life.

Rena, HR Lead (India)

Hope is to be the voice for these communities who cannot speak for themselves.

Bibek, Finance Lead (Nepal)

Hope is a belief that things will change for the better and that each of us can make a difference in that change. Hope is tangible and real; it is having a picture of how things can be and then working towards that. By having a clear understanding of who we are, individually and collectively, we can use that understanding to work toward and shape that future.

Gordon, Donor (UK)

Hope is in the connection that comes from helping people. It is our conviction to change and our actions. It is the fact that we can change - that's what matters.

Aadhar, Communication Officer (Nepal)

Hope, to me, is the feeling that, no matter the challenges, there's something good ahead that's worth striving for. It gives me the strength to stay grounded and the courage to continue, even when things are uncertain. I believe that even the smallest act of kindness or support can plant the seed of hope in someone's life.

Nikita, Project Manager in Darjeeling (India)

Resilience : Spreading its wings

The Resilience program aims to transform the relational culture and support the mental health of those who take care of others. Founded within Karuna-Shechen in 2023, it spreads its wings in 2027. Franck Blot is the Resilience Program Director and will be the captain of the new entity.

WHAT IS THE HOPE ON WHICH RESILIENCE IS FOUNDED ?

Our hope relies on a deep belief : caregiving should no longer be a matter of individual responsibility alone. It is a collective duty. Through structured cycles of six 2-hour sessions held as talking circles, with mindfulness practices, dyads, and a polyvagal framework, we offer tools for self-regulation and co-regulation. Our ambition is to spread these spaces of connection so that mutual support becomes the foundation of our care and support institutions.

LET'S IMAGINE RESILIENCE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW. WHAT DO YOU HOPE IT WILL LOOK LIKE?

In five years, I picture Resilience as an essential strategic partner in workplace mental health. We're aiming to roll out more than

100 programs and provide lasting support to at least twenty major organizations: hospitals, public services, and nonprofit structures. This impact will be measured through rigorous scientific studies, as we have been able to do in recent years.

WHAT CAN WE WISH YOU AS YOU TAKE FLIGHT?

Wish us the chance to become a true ecosystem of connection! 2027 will be a new opportunity to bring together a powerful collective: caregivers, family caregivers, social workers, instructors, partner organizations, and benefactors.

Our ambition isn't just to work from the outside, but to spread change from within by training ambassadors at the very heart of these institutions, so that this culture of connection takes lasting root.

PUTTING HOPE IN ACTION

What better way to put hope into action than by including a cause in a will? Looking toward a future we will not witness, with the hope that it will be a brighter one. Choosing to do everything in our power to ensure that it will, for those who will follow in our footsteps. We are deeply grateful to all our legacy donors for entrusting us with this hope, allowing us to keep it alive far beyond our own individual lives.



Karuna embodies the profound hope of entrusting others with one's life's work, both materially and spiritually. There is a joyful, soothing confidence in ensuring a legacy that fosters a more harmonious world. It is about staying true to what matters most.»

Fabienne, Legacy Donor

Gratitude



We are delighted to send you this sixth edition of the Letter to our Friends to express our gratitude for your support and friendship. Hope is what brings us together in this mission to support vulnerable communities of the Himalayas. A heartfelt thank you for choosing to walk this path with us.

A WORD ON MILLIE



I have had the opportunity to intern with Karuna-Shechen for six weeks to write this edition of the Letter to our Friends, as a component of my studies at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. It has been an honour and inspiration to learn, compile and share the stories of Karuna. My connection to the incredible work of the association comes from my late mother. She taught me to be kind, compassionate, and loving, but above all to use my voice. It is my hope that this edition has created space for others to use their voices and share our vision for the future we are building through our actions today.»



This sixth *Letter to our Friends* is printed on paper produced from forests managed in an environmentally-friendly and sustainable way. In France, 70% of the paper industry comes from thinning, which maintains forests (source: Ecotree). Karuna-Shechen is committed to taking the most ecological approach possible.

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