Long Distance Sponsorship: Information and Guidelines

What is the Long Distance Sponsorship for ASIA?

ASIA's Long Distance Sponsorship (LDS) project aims to protect the traditional culture and heritage of the Himalayan people. This kind of support aims to promote the development of the Himalayan community in India, Nepal and Bhutan focusing on the **education** of new generations, but also on the **spiritual and cultural heritage** transmitted by the elderly people and the monasteries. For ASIA, the LDS is not only a long-term economic aid; it is mostly a **moral commitment** of the sponsor towards the beneficiaries, to be addressed with seriousness, awareness and active involvement. Unlike a generic donation for a project, the LDS implies **a direct and personal relationship with the beneficiaries** of the project itself.

Who benefits from the Long Distance Sponsorship project?

Through the LDS ASIA:

- ensures Himalayan **children** the opportunity to complete primary education in public and private, urban or rural schools in India and Nepal;
- offers to destitute young Tibetan refugees and of the Himalayan communities, the possibility to attend high schools and universities through **study grants**;
- assures Tibetan **elderlies** of the exiled communities in India, who are alone, a home and a decent living in elderly homes;
- supports the studies and practice of young and adult **monks** and nuns and their complete sustenance in Buddhist and Bönpo Monasteries.

How much is the donation required and how will it be used?

To sponsor a child, an elder or a monk the donation required is of **€ 25 a month**, € 300 a year, whereas to sponsor a college or a high school student with a **study grant** the donation is **€ 41 a month**, or € 500 a year. 20% of this donation is retained by ASIA to cover for the project management expenses, while 80% is sent to the institutions that host children, elderly people monks and students. The raised donations are used to cover all expenses related to the improvement of the living and studying conditions of the beneficiaries: school fees, educational material, food and lodging in the dormitories, medical care, and so on. In addition, thanks to the LDS, host schools and institutions are provided with the necessary resources (qualified teachers, school materials, trainings and so on) to assure the beneficiaries an inclusive and good quality education, that respects their language and cultures.

To ensure a **transparent use of funds,** in consistency with the LDS's objectives, ASIA constantly monitors its projects through specific monitoring missions (conducted by the Italian or local staff) and regularly requests narrative, photographic and financial reports to the institutions receiving the donations.

Who manages the projects locally? What does the sponsor receive from them?

The individual projects are locally managed either by the LDS managers at **ASIA's offices** (in Kathmandu for Nepal, in Thimpu for Bhutan or from Italy in the event of the absence of local offices) that work closely together with the **institutes' representatives** or *sponsorship secretaries*, such as school headmasters or teachers, abbots or monks at the monasteries, or staff of the senior homes, who personally know the beneficiaries. The continuous exchange between ASIA and the sponsorship secretaries ensures regular checks on the proper use of donations and the collection of timely updates for the sponsors.

Photos and/or letters from beneficiaries (but sometimes also school reports, videos or project updates) are sent to every sponsor, by post or email, **twice a year*.** Nevertheless, the frequency and quality of the correspondence depend on the technological resources available to the representative, the geographic location of the institute and the efficiency of postal services. These three factors determine also the reception and delivery methods of the letters by the institute: fast and

direct between the school and the sponsor when the counterpart has the necessary resources, or slower and intermediated by ASIA offices when the institute is located in a very remote place.

***** *When starting a sponsorship, the sponsor agrees that his/her data (name, surname and address) will be shared with the representative or with the local ASIA office for the purpose of sending LDS-related material. This consent can be revoked at any time by contacting ASIA via email or phone. The sponsor also commits to follow ASIA's Child Protection Policy (available for consultation at asia-ngo.org) and to not disclose the personal data of the beneficiaries (including photos) in respect of their privacy.*

Can letters, photos and gifts be sent to the beneficiaries?

Through the **exchange of letters and photos**, sponsors and beneficiaries can establish a relationship that often becomes very profound and rewarding. The sponsor may send his/her **letters and photos** to the beneficiary at any time: **by post**, at the address of the institute or the ASIA local office provided at start of the sponsorship, **or by email** to ASIA (contact details below). In the latter case, ASIA will forward the correspondence received to the representative, who will print it and deliver it to the beneficiary in paper format. Sponsors' letters must be in English and the **beneficiary's roll number** (identifying number provided at the start of the sponsorship) clearly specified. It is recommended to pay attention to the letters' content, which should be appropriate to the age, the social and economic condition of the beneficiary, and in general to avoid sensitive issues (before delivering letters to the beneficiaries, ASIA's staff or a counterpart will check its contents).

The sponsor may also send **gifts** to the beneficiary, but it is suggested to **contain the number of gifts** and, above all, to accurately choose the content: appropriate gifts are, for example, books or other educational materials, collective games or clothing. Alternatively, in order to avoid expensive postal shipping costs, the sponsor can also make a **monetary gift** by sending it to ASIA either together with the LDS donation or separately. We suggest specifying the amount and any indication related to the gift in the reason of payment or by contacting us. In general, it is important not to create excessive expectations for the beneficiaries.

Letters of reply and/or photos of the beneficiary holding the letter or gift will be sent to the sponsor to demonstrate its **correct reception**. It has to be considered, however, that the reception may take from a few days to some months, depending on the resources and location of the institute, as well as on ASIA's scheduled transfers (in the case of monetary gifts). The sponsor is free to contact ASIA at any time in the event of any problem or delay related to the correspondence.

Can sponsors meet their beneficiary?

Sponsors can meet the beneficiaries and come in contact with their local reality while on a personal **trip to India or Nepal**. ASIA must be notified with due advance to ask the availability to the representatives or local staff, to organize the meeting and to give details of the rules to be respected at the institution (especially when meeting with minors). ASIA and/or the representatives may give sponsors general advice on accommodation, transportation, areas of interest, and so on.

Inviting the beneficiary to the sponsor's country of residence is strongly **discouraged**, since it goes against the spirit of the LDS: to allow beneficiaries to acquire the tools and knowledge necessary to be the creators of their own development in the environment they live in. A short-term journey, apart from being very complicated from a bureaucratic point of view (visa, documents, permits, etc.), could cause various problems to the beneficiaries (especially if very young) related to cultural and lifestyle differences.

How to start the LDS and which are the payment methods?

To start the LDS you need first to send your request and personal information to ASIA by filling in the online registration form at www.adoptibet.org/wp/en/long-distance-sponsorhip/ or by completing the paper forms on our brochures and pamphlets. On the form you will be able to specify the number and type of beneficiaries, any preferences or requests, and your preferred payment methods among the ones below:

- **Bank transfer in favour of ASIA Italy**, bank name: Crédit Agricole, IBAN: IT29X0623003225000015108051, BIC/SWIFT: CRPPIT2PXXX;
- **Sepa Direct Debit** (SDD) by filling the authorization mandate available on the website and upon request;
- **Credit Card or Paypal to ASIA Italy** at www.adoptibet.org/wp/en/;
- **Bank transfer or check in favour of an ASIA local office (France or Germany)** to be made directly into their relative bank accounts. For further details, please contact us (see contact details at the end of this document).

Purpose: "new long distance sponsorship of a child/monk/elder"

or "new long distance sponsorship of a student"

Amount: € 25 (monthly)/ € 150 (biannually)/ € 300 (annually)

or € 41 (monthly)/ € 250 (biannually)/ € 500 (annually)

In case of **2 or more long distance sponsorships**, a single donation (with a specific indication in the payment purpose) can be made: the total amount will be the sum of the single sponsorship contribution multiplied by the number of beneficiaries. **Sponsors who choose the monthly donation must set up an automatic payment** through their bank (automatic wire transfer order), their Paypal account (Paypal Subscription) or by authorizing a SEPA Direct Debit mandate (only for specific countries in the EU). **The automatic payment option is non-compulsory for sponsors who choose other frequencies**. After receiving notification of the payment, ASIA will formally initiate the LDS by sending the sponsor (by post and/or email), within 10 days, all relevant information (beneficiary's history form, description and address of the institute, map) and by notifying the new sponsorship to the local representative and to ASIA local staff.

How and when to make the subsequent payments (LDS renewal)?

For payments subsequent to the first one, in the cases where there are no automatic donations, the methods will be the same as mentioned above. In this case, however, the **beneficiary's identifying number** (or *roll number*) need to be indicated, especially when the person paying is not the sponsor/sponsorship holder, or when more payments are made for several beneficiaries.

In order to avoid delays or shortcomings in sending funds to beneficiaries (which occurs every six months), it is **essential that donations are made regularly, on time and in advance of the referred payment period**. Therefore, although the LDS can start at any time of the year, for management and administrative reasons, payment deadlines are the same for all sponsors: **30 June and 31 December**. Prior to these dates, ASIA will send sponsors a reminder by email or post. Sponsors who pay monthly, and in general those who have set up an automatic payment, will not have to worry about these deadlines.

Payment delays of less than 30 days are allowed and there is no need to inform ASIA. In the case of delays **exceeding 30 days**, or in case of problems or specific requirements regarding the payments, sponsors are simply asked to inform ASIA, who will handle the contingency by finding a compromise between the need of the sponsor and the need of the beneficiary.

How long does the LDS last and how to interrupt it?

The Long Distance Sponsorship does not have a predefined duration, but it is definitely **a continuous commitment**. Ideally, it coincides with the duration of the beneficiary's studies or his/her permanence at the institute. The longer the commitment will be, the greater the benefits for the project and the beneficiary (especially in the case of students) and the more profound the relationship with him/her will be. In general, **the minimum required commitment is 3 years**, but the sponsor may certainly decide to **interrupt the sponsorship at any time** (whether 1 or 10 years have passed after the beginning of the LDS) simply by informing ASIA. ASIA will in turn notice the local staff and will do its best to find a new sponsor for the beneficiary.

In the case of the **beneficiary's exit** from the project (for end of studies, withdrawal, transfer or other reasons), ASIA will promptly inform the sponsor and freeze any surplus donations. The sponsor may decide whether to initiate a new long distance sponsorship in substitution of the closed one (keeping the same donation amount and frequency) or to end his/her commitment. In general, ASIA always informs sponsors of any modification in the status of their sponsorships and it **never replaces a sponsorship without prior consent**, other than in the following two cases:

1. payment delays exceeding 18 months and continuous failure to reply to ASIA;
2. failure to interrupt donations after 6 months from the communication of closure of the LDS and failure to respond to communications from ASIA: in this case the LDS will be replaced, and the new beneficiary will receive the surplus donations.

What the sponsor can do to improve his/her experience of the LDS?

ASIA is committed to providing the best possible support to every beneficiary and to ensuring to every sponsor a positive, meaningful and rewarding experience. For this reason, we ask sponsors to respect a few but fundamental indications for the proper management of the project. It is important to **communicate in time any changes in personal data** (especially home and email addresses) or regarding the sponsorship holder. We also ask to inform us in case of any **interruption, change or delay in payments**, as well as in case of impossibility to continue with the sponsorship. Lastly, we expect each sponsor to notify us of and to **confront us with any doubt, problem or need** related to the sponsorship, so to help us solve any problem and improve our work.

Are donations for the LDS tax deductible?

Donations for the long distance sponsorship are in favour of ASIA, which is an NGO and is therefore the **recipient of tax-deductible donations** (both for physical persons and for businesses, according to each country national law). Sponsors who are eligible to pay taxes **in Italy, Germany or France**, and make their payments directly into the respective ASIA's bank accounts, are entitled to obtain fiscal tax-deductions.

ASIA contact details

For any clarifications or additional information (details on the projects; contact details of ASIA French, German or American offices; LDS as a gift; LDS for companies, associations or groups of people, etc.) please contact ASIA Headquarter via email adozioni@asia-ngo.org, telephone **+39 06 44340034,** or visit us in **via San Martino della Battaglia 31, Rome (Italy).**