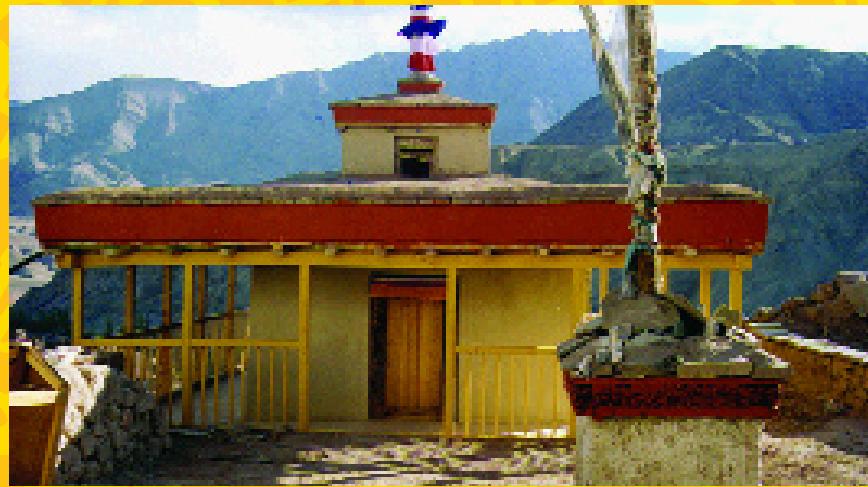
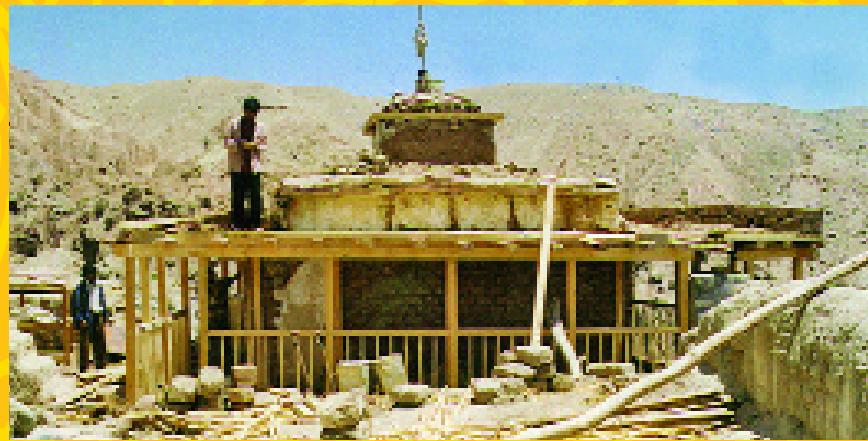


SINCE THE MAITREYA TEMPLES OF BASGO APPEARED ON WMF'S 2000 AND 2002 LISTS OF 100 MOST ENDANGERED SITES, EXTENSIVE CONSERVATION WORK HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT. THE DIMINUTIVE SHRINE OF CHAMCHUNG, RIGHT AND CENTER, HAS BEEN COMPLETELY RESTORED. WORK HAS ALSO BEGUN AT THE TEMPLE OF CHAMBA LAKHANG, BELOW, TO CONSTRUCT A RETAINING WALL AROUND THE STRUCTURE, REPAIR ITS ROOF, AND CONSOLIDATE ITS MURALS. PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF WORK ON THE SANCTUARY'S MURALS THIS PAST APRIL, A PRAYER CEREMONY WAS HELD IN WHICH THE SACRED SPIRIT OF THE BUDDHA WAS TRANSFERRED FROM THE PAINTINGS TO A MIRROR AND WRAPPED IN SILK WHERE IT WILL REMAIN UNTIL CONSERVATION OF THE TEMPLE IS COMPLETE. WORK IS ALSO WELL UNDERWAY AT SERZANG TEMPLE.



WMF/NRAC





LOCAL HEROES

NEW LIFE FOR A TRIO OF BUDDHIST TEMPLES IN THE MOUNTAIN KINGDOM OF LADAKH

Embraced by two of the world's great mountain ranges—the Himalaya and the Karakoram—the tiny Buddhist kingdom of Ladakh—now part of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir—is one of the most desolate places on Earth. Yet it is also one of the most enchanting with its snow-capped peaks and rugged mountain passes dotted with ancient monasteries, temples, and shrines attesting an acetic past. Numerous fortresses in the region, however, tell of a more volatile history and struggle for survival. Among these is the great Basgo Citadel, built of mudbrick and rammed earth during the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries by the Tibetan King Grags-pa-'bum and his successors, adherents of a tantric form of Mahayana Buddhism. Within the fortress are three temples with extraordinary muraled interiors—Chamba Lakhang, Serzang, and Chamchung—erected in celebration of the Great Maitreya, the fifth Buddha who, it was believed, would lead all sentient beings into

liberation and eternal bliss. The second largest of these sanctuaries—Serzang—contains a 14-meter-high gilded-copper statue of the Maitreya Buddha surrounded by scenes from his life and portraits of patrons who underwrote the construction of the temple complex.

When the three Maitreya Temples of Basgo first appeared on WMF's 2000 list of *100 Most Endangered Sites*, they were in an advanced state of decay with failing roofs, sagging floor joists, crumbling plaster, and damaged murals. Today, however, these wonders of Tibetan architecture are undergoing a major restoration effort spearheaded by the local community, carried out by an international team of conservators and locally trained artisans, and underwritten by WMF's Robert Wilson Challenge in partnership with the New Delhi-based Namgyal Institute for Research on Ladakhi Art and Culture. Following restoration, the temples will resume their vital role in the spiritual lives of the community that has cared for them for more than four centuries. ■