

Dear supporters and friends of the Medical Center School in Jharkot,
Dear pupils, parents and teachers at the Muisches Gymnasium,

We missed the deep snow and had only telephone calls with our loved ones at Christmas and New Year: instead we spent two weeks in Nepal at the winter school with our kids and colleagues (since winter in the mountains is too cold, everyone moves to the temporary winter quarters in Pokhara in order to keep the school running)...



We'll be reporting on the new year and what it has brought - this time our young colleague Nadia El Ayachi accompanied us on the journey.

A wonderful welcome!

1. Pen pals, sponsors and school bags >>
2. Christmas with Bollywood >>
3. Vitamins and substantial improvements >>
4. A test run: Co-operation with the public school >>
5. Training: successes and plans >>
6. Former students >>
7. A look at the books >>
8. Milli Pal: a special case >>

1. Pen pals, sponsors and school bags

It's always an exciting time when the letters from class 4i arrive from Austria. This time, Mr. Wolf was the postman. The children didn't just read their own letters, but those written to their friends too, the older children helping the younger ones to decipher and understand the content. And then it was straight to writing replies: first they wrote in their English books, corrections were made and they wrote out a copy, which was then decorated: "Please can you give me green paper?" or, "I need scissors, please!"



Answering the letters – and another favourite occupation: Nadia's hair!

Another afternoon there was another postal delivery: this time from the sponsors (if there hadn't been three of us, we wouldn't have been able to carry all the lovely letters and packets from Austria). First of all there was a little finger puppet play for everyone. The finger puppets - who are in urgent need of more friends - made their way to the 5 children who do not yet have their own sponsors.

And then there was more great excitement over letter, photos and the thrilling items that came to light: art materials, pencils, games, gloves ... Lhakpa Tsering, for example, cannot be separated from his little Lego Viking warrior.

Project manager Mohan and Tibetan teacher Tsering Dolkar are delighted with the school bag prototypes produced by class 5u. Together we are deciding which model will form the basis for the production of 30 bags at a small sewing workshop in Pokhara, and which good ideas can be taken from the other prototypes. The children don't know anything about the new bags yet, so many extraordinary things were going on that it seemed smarter not to reveal this new surprise just yet.

2. Christmas with Bollywood

Nepal has a large Hindu majority and the people in our region (and of course at our school) are Buddhists. But that didn't stop anyone celebrating Christmas with us - on the contrary! So we made a Christmas tree together, which was pinned to the wall of the improvised kitchen (a covered terrace that also serves as dining hall and assembly room). On Christmas Eve we lit candles and we all sang Tibetan and Austrian songs. The children made beautiful Christmas cards for us and we gave them the Christmas present from 3i's textile group: for every child there was an "aqua bag", with a brightly coloured zip, which we filled with new pencils, sharpeners, pens and gummy bears. While we waited for the steamed momos, an impromptu dance session began - to Bollywood music played on a mobile phone. The children danced together, or sometimes formed a circle into the middle of which one or two dancers would jump to perform a solo.

It was really cold - we were wearing our thick winter coats - but the beaming faces and good mood kept us warm!



Christmas memories: the "tree", the children, the teachers...

3. Vitamins and substantial improvements



A welcome vitamin boost

The Salzburg firm BIOGENA NATURPRODUKTE GmbH & Co KG has been supporting the development of our project school since October.

For this trip we were generously kitted out with vitamin supplements for all the children and adults in the project. They really came in handy: when we arrived nearly everybody was coughing, some of them very badly. After just a few days of taking the vitamins, everyone, right down to the youngest pupil, was right as rain again.

The first big bridge to be crossed with support from BIOGENA is the construction of a new solar power supply for our school rooms at the monastery in Jharkot. The old one only manages to power two little neon lamps - and that only for a few hours. The new supply will power the teaching rooms, prayer room, kitchen, ordination room and bedrooms and will be constructed in such a way that it will be possible to dismantle it and reinstall it in a new building.

The next project will then be a second shower and a working source of running hot water (at the moment when it comes to washing yourself, water is heated in a saucepan on the solar cooker in the monastery courtyard), as well as bunk beds to make a bit more room to move in the children's bedrooms, as well as allowing room for a few more children to be accommodated. Yes, and the rooms are in urgent need of a new coat of paint...

4. A test run: Co-operation with the public school

The Nepalese school authorities would like to turn the public primary school in Jharkot into a secondary school, starting with **grade 6** of the coming school year, which begins in April. In order to have enough children for this, a collaboration with our Medical Center School is necessary.

Despite some scepticism we - project manager Mohan Gurung, Wolf Pichlmüller and Christina Klaffinger – attended a meeting with the manager of the Jharkot primary school, Bodha Raj Paudel, teachers Bhoja Raj Aryal and Srikanta Paudel, and Jharkot village representative Tsewang Angyal. Aside from the organisational considerations, we wanted



to be sure that the quality attained at the project school would be ensured and improved upon in the co-op school with such a partnership, in terms of:

- teaching quality and
- quality of social environment

We have arranged to undertake the merging of the schools for a year, as a “test run”. The teaching staff at the Medical Center School will be used on an equal footing with the state teaching staff. The education management of the joint school will be taken on by both Mohan and Bodha Raj Paudel. Project members from Schule macht Schule are invited to observe and help plan lessons at any time (this most definitely includes our volunteers).

Negotiations on the roof terrace: Tsewang Angyal from Jharkot and Wolf Pichlmüller

There will be a written agreement for this test period, which will detail the joint objectives and the rules to be followed. This agreement will be signed by management and teaching staff on both sides, as well as members of the Jharkot village committee (the village committee has considerable influence at the public school and with the school authority). The reliability of the teaching staff, as well as non-violent teaching methods will be some of the important elements of the agreement.

Why take part in this experiment?

- Only children who graduate from a state school have the opportunity (with very good performance) to receive a state stipend for further education
- The teachers necessary for the expansion of school levels are provided by the state
- The children who have as yet only attended the village school in Jharkot - mostly very socially deprived children of migrant workers - will also benefit from the better quality of education at the co-op school.

The new regime will change nothing in the extra-curricular care for the children - at the boarding school and in their free time.

5. Teacher Training: Successes and plans



The training courses of the last school year have already borne fruit: since the 3 day caregiver training course from colleagues at Nepalhouse Kaski and a multi-week course on Montessori methods, teachers having been creating lessons for the youngest children that are noticeably better suited to them. And since Rishikesh's nutrition course, the sugar content of the omnipresent tea has been substantially reduced (there wasn't much for our cook to change in his cooking: it has always been balanced and wholesome).

Amchi Ngawang, our young doctor of traditional Tibetan medicine is currently taking a multi-week course in special physiotherapy measures at the AB Care & Rehabilitation Hospital in Pokhara, an institution we were able to visit briefly and which made a good impression on us.

Morning stretching - now a standard part of the day

Basanta Subedi, manager of Nepalhouse Kaski (an institute financed and run by Canadians for the the psychological care of traumatised children and their families, which also runs a small Montessori school) will be sending a colleague to Jharkot for another multi-week teacher training course. We are as delighted as our teaching team: this doesn't just mean theoretical training, it also means support for the use of what has been learned right in the classroom. The state teaching staff at the co-op school will also be included in this training.



6. Former students

In Kathmandu we met up with our former students, visited Swayambunath with them and had a meal in a little pub. Two of them are learning the art of Thangka painting, 5 are training to become Amchhis. They are all taking their training very seriously and are very successful. They keep in touch with former peers from the school, as well as children following in their footsteps from the school. When asked whether they're now in the right place, the answer was a resounding "YES!"

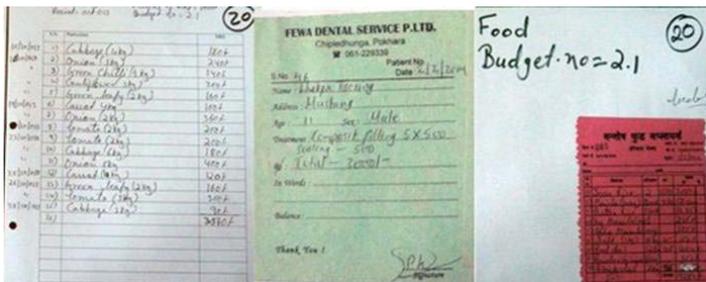
Sonam Wangdu, now studying Thangka painting, at the easel

Ngawang Thupten, who couldn't make it to the get-together, sent us a mail last week:

„sorry that i didn't manage time to meet you. At that time i was meeting my mom after two years so she asked me to stay with her, so i couldn't come to meet you. i felt very sad for that.”

On one of our trips into the area around Pokhara we were joined by two other former students: Ngawang Gyamtso and Tsering Pemba, who are now doing very well at Lekshed Tsal School at the Jampaling Tibetan Settlement. They fit into the group as if they'd never been away...

7. A look at the books



Of course our regular visits to the project have something of an inspection about them to; so this time too we spent a day checking over bills and book-keeping and having a look at the staff attendance list and the official permits for the project. Project manager Mohan takes these checks very well: our questions are patiently answered, ambiguities - where it's usually just a case of a few cents - are meticulously cleared up.

Every rupee is counted

We also discussed increasing the salaries and travel allowances: the last raise was back in September 2013, and inflation in Nepal was 12% just in 2013. We agree a raise of 15%, so that monthly wages are now between 7600 and 15900 rupees (by the current exchange rate, between 66 and 138 Euros). At the end of the year, there is a bonus of a 13th month's wages; all the staff have free board and lodging and their travel costs home at the beginning and end of the summer holidays are also covered.



8. Milli Pal: a special case

This time we have another appeal, which is not directly related to Schule macht Schule:

Through Jay Pal Prakash, a Nepalese friend, who has always stood by our project with words and deeds, a young girl from Jay's village in Terai (in southern Nepal) came to our attention. In spite of the financial difficulties faced by her family, 16-year-old Milli Pal is about to graduate with very good grades from the school she has been able to attend with Jay's support. Her great desire is to become a nurse. She has already passed the difficult entry exams for a good medical school (the HOPE International College in Satdobato, Lalitpur).

That doesn't mean that she will be able to realise her career dream though: such training is expensive in Nepal - the 461,000 NR required for the 3 year training (around 4000 Euros with today's exchange rate) is a prohibitive amount for her family. Jay cannot manage these costs either. He is already providing secondary school fees for a

number of children from his village and will continue to help with Milli's care costs.

Even if only a few of you were to help, Milli would be able to begin her training in April:

Split across the 3 years, just 115 Euros per month is needed.

How can you contribute?

- With a one-off donation for Milli's training: send your payment to the Schule macht Schule donation account, marking it with the reference "Milli Pal".
- With a standing order (also possible for part of the monthly amount stated above, or for a limited time): set up the standing order to the Schule macht Schule donation account, with the reference "Milli Pal" and let us know in a brief email to team@schule-macht-schule.at about your long term involvement.

It would be wonderful if we could make this career path a possibility!

Please and thank you

As always, a big thank you on behalf of the children and all those involved with the project for your interest and help – which we hope will continue!

Christina Klaffinger

Wolf Pichlmüller



Christina Klaffinger and Wolfgang Pichlmüller
Schule macht Schule - Musisches Gymnasium Salzburg's Nepal Project
www.schule-macht-schule.at/index-e.html

Donation account:
Volksbank Salzburg
Schule macht Schule

IBAN: AT09 4501 0000 0811 1486
BIC: VBOEATWW