

## Schule macht Schule Newsletter December 2015: A difficult year and new hope

Dear supporters and friends of the Medical Center School Jharkot, dear pupils, parents and teachers at the Musisches Gymnasium!

2015 was a difficult year for the children and those involved in running our project. And we were almost at the point of having to begin our newsletter with: no winter school! Then a few days ago, the happy news reached us:

**No winter school!**

We'll tell you more about that in the first section of the newsletter, but first an overview of this newsletter:

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*Celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday*

### 1. And now this: border blockade!

In September a new constitution was passed and since then protesting residents of the border district have been blockading Nepal's border with India with force in order to enforce their demand for a withdrawal of the new legislation. The blockade has resulted in Nepal being practically cut off from essential provisions. The Nepalese police keep clearing one border crossing or another, but nonetheless barely any vehicles come through. On the Indian side of the blockade queues of lorries have formed, many kilometres long. The Indian government asserts that the uncertain situation at the border is enough to keep the stranded lorries from entering the neighbouring country. However, since September Indian authorities have ordered border control officers to search every vehicle in detail, rather than simply waving most of them through as before. So even when the border is periodically open, scarcely any lorries come through.

Message from project leader Mohan (early December):

*still we have very serious crises of petroleum product and cooking gas especially. these day most of the people are cooking over fire wood, including us at Jampling. You have shortage of uncountable things in the market. Medicines are brought from Bangladesh. Prices are three times higher than usual. public hospitals have run out of medicine. Pharmacy are getting closed, there is huge shortage of vaccination and many other problems.*

*i don't think we will be able to conduct winter school at the usual time as every year. we have already informed the parents that once the situation comes to normal and there is a regular flow of gas in the market then we shall call them down to PKR.*

The situation has not improved since we received this message. We gave Mohan the okay to obtain gas at much more than the usual price should it become necessary – last Thursday we heard:

*We will manage the winterschool in the same old place, from this Sunday.*

– and that was just the day before yesterday!

*Everything is going on as planned. Dolkar, Lobsang and Rishikesh managed to arrange the rooms and take in 15 students today. Hope the far living ones will arrive by tomorrow evening.*

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## 2. Volunteers: our delegates on location

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Hannah Gehmacher from the Musisches Gymnasium (graduated 2015), who has been in Jharkot since October and who spent the waiting time for the winter school travelling, has already been notified that things are up and running again. She will get back to the children as soon as possible. Benita Kogler (also graduated 2015) will be joining the team towards the end of January. They will be replaced by Carina Hochrainer and Elias Höck (Carina is a primary school teacher and Elias is doing his Austrian national service with the Red Cross) and then by Marlene Koller, who is already in employment, but wishes to work with us before a change of job. These three came across our project via friends. In the autumn, we'll be back to volunteers from the Musisches Gymnasium again.

The almost permanent presence of these trusted individuals enables us to better understand what's happening in the project and reassures us that we're not getting a false image from afar.

*Hannah with some of our girls and Amchi Ngawang*



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## 3. The experiment with the public school

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In the last detailed newsletter before the big earthquake, we reported on the planned test run of the "cooperative school": our Jharkot Medical Center School and the little state primary school in Jharkot are working together in the current school year. In Nepal the school year begins in March/April. We are not yet able to judge how successful the trial is: there has been no normalcy yet – first there was the earthquake at the end of April, then the transport problems, which made it difficult for the state teachers to return to Jharkot after the holidays ...

What we can say though, is that in the end of term exams the results from the children from the Medical Center School were without exception clearly ahead of their fellow students who do not attend our boarding school.

Another wonderful endorsement of our work: Ngawang Gyamtso and Tsering Pemba, two boys who were placed in the Lekshed Tsal secondary school in Jampaling Tibetan Settlement in April 2014, are both top of their respective classes. Tsering Pemba even achieved the best results in the school and was able to skip a year. (It is standard in Nepal that all the children are ranked according to their results and this ranking is public.)

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## 4. Earthquake, aftermath

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Let us say straight away: we were lucky. There were a few anxious days until it was clear that everyone – everyone – connected to our project escaped unscathed. Nonetheless: the fear and powerlessness experienced in the middle of such events are not so quickly forgotten.

We have received many generous donations from every direction, earmarked for the earthquake fund – a total of 7500 Euros! With this money we weren't just able to take care of the immediate cost of the earthquake to the project, but were also able to cover the subsequent costs, such as increased food prices.

Approximately 1500 Euros have hitherto gone toward the repair of the school wing of the Jharkot monastery. This damage was underestimated at first: the architect and civil engineer Claudia Canz, Chairwoman of "Förderverein Freundeskreis Jharkotprojekt e.V." saw the situation for herself in June and arranged for the most urgent repairs to be made: a wall in the basement, which was at risk of collapse due to the combined effects of water penetration and the earthquake, had to be underpinned and the gap in the plaster in the courtyard taken care of. Another problem place is being observed with the aid of a simple crack monitor.

One consequence of the earthquake is that we are striving for the construction of our own safe new building for our project with renewed motivation.



*Villages helping with repairs*

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## 5. Plans for new construction

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The rooms at the Jharkot monastery that are used by the project do not belong to us. There's also no rental agreement. Although we are welcome guests at the monastery, there is no certainty that we can remain there permanently. It is for this reason that following the earthquake we only invested enough in the building to be sure that

people's safety is guaranteed for the time being. The enormous costs of radical renovation could potentially all be for nought in a few years.

Instead we are striving with renewed energy for the construction of a building that would belong to the Nepalese project team. Mohan is already in discussion with the village community about a piece of land that is to be permanently and officially passed into hands of the project. Principle considerations and adaptable plans for a building made from traditional construction materials with passive solar energy use have been provided by Beatrix Kovacs, UK. There are also already noteworthy reserves for this initiative: we hope that the consequences of the border blockade won't upset our plans.

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## 6. Coming and going – our children

This year two girls from our school graduated to Amchi training: Karchung Lhamo and Pema Yangdon now live in Kathmandu and are studying traditional Tibetan medicine. Sonam Wangyal, who had to skip a year due to a hip complaint can now walk pain-free once more and has begun training as a Tangka painter. He is now the third artistically talented boy who has transferred from our school to the Tsering Art School in Boudha near Kathmandu. Our Polish partners, who previously took nine of our former students under their wing, couldn't take three more. It has been possible to secure the training of these three students for the time being though, thanks to: the Wörndl, Atzwanger and Hong families, a group of friends of Eva Weingärtler and a group of colleagues from Biogena.

In April a new boy was enrolled to the Medical Center School: Pema Tsering from Manang. He was born in 2004 and has two siblings. His father works as a porter and his mother manages the little farm.



*Our new pupil Pema Tsering*

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## 7. From nothing comes nothing, but ....

... from our helpers of all generations comes a great deal! Here are just a few examples:

The ball committee for this year's Leaver's Ball **faMuse** had a splendid finale: "We started as students of the Musisches Gymnasium in 2007. That year the Nepal project was also brought into being [...] We are delighted that this project has developed so well during our time at school!" Along with that came a generous cheque for the project – thank you faMuse!

The new **school bags** have now been made at a small tailor shop in Pokhara according to the prototype developed by the former Class 5u and are proving their worth.

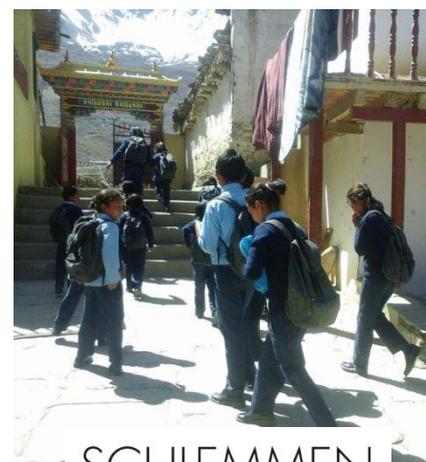
*On the way to school, well-equipped with new school bags*

The now traditional "**Feast for Jharkot**" from Class 4i served up Syrian food and Syrian live music this time. A portion of the profits went to the Integrationscafé Oberndorf, the rest went towards 4i's sponsored child.

All but three of the project children have **sponsors**, who take responsibility for their individual needs and keep in touch with them. New to the fold as sponsors are: classes 4a and 5a and the Glögl family.

The company BIOGENA NATURPRODUKTE GmbH & Co KG has been a great supporter of the project's development for more than a year now. In the last year for example, we have been able to modernise the **solar power system** and each room now has light during the regular evening power cuts.

The "Förderverein Freundeskreis Jharkotprojekt e.V." association can currently be found at **Christmas markets** in the Stuttgart area – the long-term partnership with this association contributes significantly to the fact that our project can also look forward positively to the future.



SCHLEMMEN



EINE AKTION DER 4I-KLASSE FÜR UNSERE PARTNERSCHULE IN NEPAL

FÜR JHARKOT

MUSISCHES GYMNASIUM  
MITTWOCH  
2. DEZEMBER • GROSSE PAUSE

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## 8. Help with know-how and time

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- Do you like organising, or do you enjoy networking?
- Are you proficient in bookkeeping or tax accounting?
- Do you enjoy advising young people, or do you take pleasure in research?
- Do you know your way around "willhaben.at" or Facebook?
- Are you familiar with company law?
- Do you have good contacts in Nepal, or with institutions and companies in Europe?
- Would you like to know more about the project?

In order for the project to continue to develop and for the new building to become a reality and for the children in our partner school to be given the best possible chances for their future, we need you – if you would like to help, even if in a limited scope: please contact us!



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### Please and thank you

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On behalf of the children and everyone involved in the project, we say a very big thank you for your interest and your support – which we hope will continue!

Christina Klaffinger

Wolf Pichlmüller

[www.schule-macht-schule.at](http://www.schule-macht-schule.at)

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