

Update after 10 months – Schule macht Schule Newsletter August 2017

Dear supporters and friends of the Medical Centre School in Jharkot, dear students, parents and teachers of the Musisches Gymnasium, There has been a long wait for this newsletter, but it doesn't mean that nothing has happened – on the contrary!

It's so exciting for the children when they're allowed to use the computer. At the beginning of each lesson we go through the terms like "keyboard", "screen" and "desktop". Last time Tashi Dolma called the mouse "rat". So in Jharkot, we have rats running across the screen... (Carolina Bernauer, a volunteer at Jharkot in spring)

You'll find out below how the rats came into play in the first place – enjoy!

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Morning exercise!

1) Our volunteers – engaged and indispensable

The flow of volunteers or 'delegates' round the clock at the Jharkot project has tremendously revolutionised the academic system in our cooperative school. Having delegates at our school is a huge blessing for our pupils and Jharkot project and we pray that it continues as long as the project stands for a great cause. We truly appreciate your genuine effort and selfless approach to furnish our underprivileged students with better academic quality and paving for them an aspiring vision into the modern world. Hats off to you!



Lena from Bavaria teaches on the "Labdoo" (see item 8)

– This is how project manager Mohan describes the role of our volunteers for the children in the project. Their reports are also essential for keeping up to date with what's happening in the project, what progress and problems exist and what the next steps are.

Constanze Kreuzberger describes a day in Jharkot in her travel diary (you can read it below at the [end of the newsletter >>](#)). After Constanze and Leonie Salzmann came: Nicole Rumpler (psychologist, Vienna), Lena Mair (high school graduate, Reichenhall) and Carolina Bernauer (high school graduate, Musisches Gymnasium). Working now in Jharkot: Rita Teynor-Bark (teacher at BORG Wiener Neustadt) and Carina Imser (kindergarten teacher, Salzburg).

2) Trial period – the co-operative school develops

Our school's co-operation with the little public primary school in Jharkot is developing – despite occasional differences in opinion about observance of official duties. For the first time last winter the majority of the “government kids” and 4 teachers from the public school came to the winter school in Pokhara – instead of, as usual, stopping lessons for a good three months due to the cold. It also helps to ensure that the divide between the two groups of children doesn't grow – children who are taught in the same age group are actually years apart in terms of performance: depending on whether they come from our project, where there are two learning stages aside from school lessons, or from the public school. Such children have no support for their learning at home and additionally only attend school irregularly. The boarding school situation at the winter school had a very positive effect in this regard.

The joint school is now a little better kitted out: the school committee from the public school has supplied a copier/printer and *Schule macht Schule* has provided a computer for communal use.

The request from the public school to expand from 5 to 6 classes was submitted too late to the school authorities. The school year begins in April and so for the 2017/18 year there will be a new attempt.



Norbu Tsering in a Tibetan lesson. Only at the co-operative school is the mother tongue taught

3) New faces, new paths

There are new faces among both the children and the workers at the project:

Three new **children** are now living and learning at the project:

- Sonam Dhendup, a boy from Tangya, Upper Mustang, 9 years old.
- Sonia Bika, a girl from the hamlet of Purang near Jharkot, 8 years old. She is the first child at our school who isn't a member of the Gurung ethnic group. Mohan was able to persuade the committee of the local project that poor family circumstances must be the most relevant selection criterion for admission.
- Pema Dolkar, 11 years old. This girl's parents came from the poverty-stricken region of Dolpo to Dzong, a village near Jharkot, on the other side of the ravine. There they run an abandoned farm. Pema Dolkar has never been to school and now has the opportunity to gain an education with us.



Lego: something new for Sonam Dhendup

Tsering Lhamo, Pasang Lhamo, Kelsang and Lhakpa Wangmo have moved on to the secondary school in Jampaling, Lekshed Tsal School (a very good school with a Tibetan background), where they will be complete grades 6 and 7. Tsering Dolkar and Mohan will continue to keep an eye on the girls; with your help, the costs will continue to be borne by *Schule macht Schule*. These four are replacing, so to speak, our former students Tsering Pemba and Ngawang Gyamtso: the two boys finished Lekshed Tsal School at the top of their class and are now attending the SOS Higher Secondary School in Gorepatan, Pokhara, working towards the SLC (School Leaving Certificate) and possibly the 10+2 (Ten Plus Two; roughly equivalent to the Austrian Matura, or British A Level).



Sonia has already started settling in



Our girls enter their new school in Jampaling

In total *Schule macht Schule* is currently financing the education of 26 children and young people, 19 of them at the boarding school in Jharkot. A further 16 youths, who have moved on to secondary education, are supported by Mohan and Tsering Dolkar in terms of organisation and education. Thanks also go to the Polish organisation “Schoolsfaraway.org”, who raise the funds for 9 of them!



Pema Dolkar with her mother – very sceptical at first



Karchung Lhamo and Pema Yangdon meet with Nicole

Schule macht Schule delegate Nicole Rumpler met a number of these former project children:

Yesterday I met six of the former Jharkot students, who are now studying traditional Tibetan medicine, among them Pema Yangdon and Karchung Lhamo. We talked about healing techniques and related cultural differences for two hours [...] I was fascinated by how seriously the young Amchis take their work and how much they're learning, for example through their practice in various regions of Nepal. [...] They are such ambitious students, open-minded and modern and yet connected to their Mustang homeland and their school in Jharkot.

Staff:

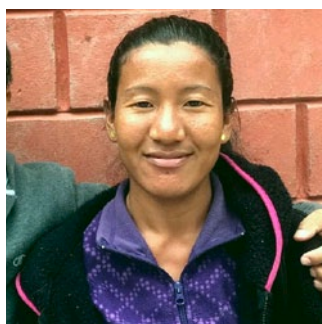
In April, Amchi Ngawang's three-year contract came to an end and he left the project in order to continue working in southern Nepal. Dr. Tenzing Rigdol has now joined us for at least two years. He is not just a doctor of Tibetan medicine (Amchi), but also a Buddhist monk and has a great deal of experience in the production of traditional medicinal preparations. His spiritual background and his house visits have already earned him the trust of the local people.

Tsering Lhamo, the sister of a former student is now a member of our team, taking over from Lobsang Wangmo as teacher and carer at our boarding school. We're delighted to have these two newcomers!

Sita has replaced our previous washerwoman. She is also helping our very capable cook Deaumaya – they're cooking for 25 people or more, 7 days a week.



New Amchi, Dr. Tenzin Rigdol



Tsering Lhamo, teacher and carer



Cook and laundress: sisters Deau Maya and Sita

4) Big Band Brunch and other campaigns

The election for the Austrian Federal Presidency may have been postponed, but the **Big Band Brunch** on 2.10.2016 in Ziegelstadel, organised by *Team 20.14* from Hallein, was not. The *Big Band* from the *Musikgymnasium* (the music department at the *Musisches Gymnasium*) and the vocal ensemble *Hohes C* provided a great atmosphere, the team from *Biogena hilft!* (Biogena helps!) and the crew from *Restaurant Kathmandu* in Salzburg put on a great spread of treats, from Nepalese delicacies to homemade cakes. The big audience really splashed out – *Schule macht Schule* was delighted that the event raised an amount as high as the Annapurna Massif (at the foot of which Jharkot lies). A fantastic contribution for the forthcoming new building in Jharkot!

Support from the eastern and western corners of Austria: *BORG Wiener Neustadt/Niederösterreich* organised a charity run, 10 teachers and 124 students defied the rain and ran 1332km for the new school building in Jharkot! *Volksschule Doren* in Vorarlberg generously supported our children in Jharkot again with their "Theater im Advent". Thank you very much everyone, Rita and Doris in particular!

Profiting from literature: Not just the listeners, but *Schule macht Schule* benefited too. *Class 8's literature group* at the *Musisches Gymnasium* didn't just contribute the fee for their appearance at the ÖZBF Congress in Salzburg, but also successfully elicited donations for the project from the audience at their final reading at the Literaturhaus – a big thank you!

There are an unbelievable number of people who contribute to the project being able to keep running and slowly develop – the campaigns reported on here are representative of everything happening and our thanks go to them/to you all.



View of stage at the Big Band Brunch

5) Big supporters in the spotlight!

Since we took on the project (2008/09) the duties have expanded – and with them the costs. We started with 14 children and now there are 20 running around the boarding school. Job starter courses and visits to secondary schools are being financed, medical care is being improved, meals are more varied and healthier...



The Christmas market held by partner association Jharkot-Projekt e.V.



Vitamin boost from BIOGENA



Mohan teaching with the aid of the SNOW HD7 video magnifier from ZOOMAX

It is in large part thanks to the *Jharkot-Projekt e.V. association* >> that this is all manageable and savings can also be put aside for the new building. The organisation, which is based in Steinheim, Mur (Germany), has been connected to the project since 2007 and provides active financial and non-material support – particularly in traditional medicine. Execution and accounting for the project is the remit of *Schule macht Schule*; *Jharkot-Projekt e.V.* receives all reports and accounts.

How is *Jharkot-Projekt e.V.* financed? Architect Claudia Canz, Chairperson of the association, explains:

"On the one hand it's a conduit of the Lotte von Süsskind Foundation, which is interested in the medical aspect of the project. And then there are our sales, particularly at Christmas markets, for example in Winnenden and Prevorst. Nowadays, in terms of marketing, this rather takes care of itself. Last Christmas Kunsang sold his momos and Eva sold beautiful shawls from Nepal. A friend of Martina's put his little garage at our disposal, which we have to reconstruct each time, as it's used for repairs during the week..."

As always we are especially grateful to the staff and management at *BIOGENA* >>, who support a number of aid projects in Asia with their organisation *Biogena hilft!* (Biogena helps!) – and since November 2014 that has included *Schule macht Schule*. It is not just their regular contribution that makes BIOGENA a cornerstone of the project; they also offer a training sponsorship and concrete collaboration – for example at the Big Band Brunch (see the report)!

Project manager Mohan suffered retinal detachment in both eyes in an accident in 2012 and since then has only had peripheral vision. For a year now his ability to read and write has been improved with the arrival of the SNOW HD 7. Manufacturer *ZOOMAX* >> provided this top quality electronic magnifier and the whole project has profited from this assistance.

6) The issue of donation deductibility

In order for donations in Austria to be able to be included in tax calculations, organisations require the certificate of donation beneficiary – for this accounts must be checked each year by a chartered accountant.

We have adjusted our association statutes (purely an issue of phrasing), prepared our profit and loss account for examination, had meetings with the accountant and obtained official papers from Nepal (time-consuming for Mohan too). In the end we decided to forgo the certificate:

- Why are there expenses for medicine for the mother of a child? The statutes do not provide for that!
- Advance pay for an employee? Due to earthquake damage to their parents' house? On a basis of trust? That should be officially secured!

Clearly judgement and common sense are not a factor here; the fact that the project is small and has an annual budget of around 30,000 Euros, meaning that just the costs for annual accounting would nearly meet the 10% maximum permitted for administrative costs, is of no significance. We would have to give up what sets *Schule macht Schule* apart: the ability to react flexibly and non-bureaucratically. Seeing what is necessary and possible within our scope and doing that.

All the facts, decisions and developments are discussed by the association's board and at the annual general meeting, the financial management is checked annually by the association's auditor. If you are interested in a statement of project costs beyond what you read in the newsletter, we are happy to share these – just send us an email!

7) Accounts 2016 – a positive balance

The project costs for the Jharkot school dropped a good 2% to **3,037,314 NPR** (Nepalese rupees), approximately **28,000 EUR**.

Added to this are the additional costs for the three young people whose training in Tibetan medicine or Thangka painting are financed by sponsors through *Schule macht Schule*: in 2016 that was **357,980 NPR**, approximately **3250 EUR**.

A positive balance, partly due to the acute crisis of the earthquake and border blockade in March 2016 abating. Bearing in mind that retail prices in Nepal are suffering high inflation – 9.9% in 2016 according to data portal knoema.de – these numbers also show how responsibly the project staff are dealing with your donations!

Incidentally: a good 5.5% of the project's needs in 2016 were met by the project staff, the children and their parents. It looks good for this year too – Mohan's email from 26.7.17:

We all are fine and in great spirit. Rain was consistent for two days after I arrived here and we had a leakage from the courtyard to the corridor below, but with the help of Pema Wangchuk and Angya [the two oldest boys in the project] managed to fix the problem. Our kitchen garden is providing us with ample green leafy vegetable at the moment. Thanks to Dolkar and the bigger students. Their hard work paid off very well. Only food stuff we need to buy from Ranipowa are those things we don't get at this altitude.



The truck has brought supplies for the summer



Penpa Lhamo planting chard in the kitchen garden

8) Labdoo and the rats, or: prolonging the life of your old laptop

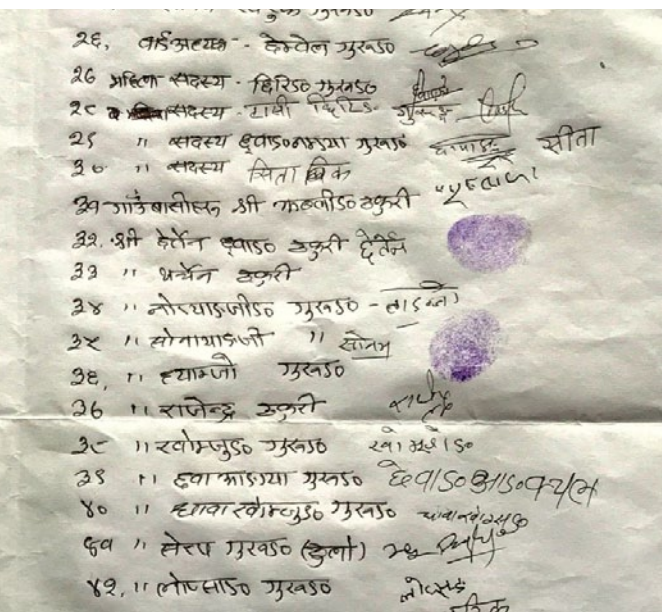
Since April the kids at Jharkot have been receiving weekly computer lessons: they can now use two used laptops with the Ubuntu operating system and educational software, Open Office and the British Offline Wikipedia for Schools (a third device is currently being prepared). Hence the rats in the introduction to the newsletter.

We have the donors and Frank Bubek from the organisation Labdoo (www.labdoo.org >>), to thank for the devices. Labdoo provides laptops for lessons in aid projects such as *Schule macht Schule*, tracking their use and enabling appropriate disposal.

We would like to get two more devices for the school in Jharkot. If you have a laptop you're looking to replace and/or can donate, please let us know. It shouldn't be much older than 10 years old and the battery should last at least an hour.



Discovering how computers work ...



9) News of the new building plans – we're off ... and yet not quite

Since our visit to the project last summer, we know that things are getting serious for the boarding school's new building: the more than 4000 m² piece of land is measured, the village community has agreed to relinquish the plot – see photo. Now the legal papers must be acquired. It's more difficult than we thought: as part of the regional elections that have finally taken place after the new constitution was introduced, local authorities have to be re-established. Only the new district administration will be able to take the appropriate steps. Project manager Mohan Gurung is in contact with the designated district chief.

Every household in Jharkot has given their permission, either with a signature or fingerprint, to relinquish the plot for the new building

10) Miscellaneous: Reports, requests – and a search

Ngodup, Mohan's young son, who suffers from Duchenne muscular dystrophy (as we reported in April and September 2016), is still waiting for the new therapy that is paired with Ayurveda elements. We all hope he'll be signed up for the related clinical tests.

shop2help: Buying online and helping free of charge. It definitely works – with your help! For a good year now (May 2016) we have raised 226 EUR in this way (between 3 and 42 EUR per month). We can surely increase this figure!

Do you shop online? Then bookmark the link to our portal at shop2help: [>>](http://www.shop2help.net/schulemachtschule)

When you visit and buy from online shops via this portal *Schule macht Schule* receives 2-10% of the item value, depending on the retailer. An increasing number of online shops are working together with shop2help, from Amazon to intimissimi or Zotter...

After a break we are back to posting regular news, pictures and updates about the project on our **Facebook** page. Facebook uses a fairly incomprehensible algorithm to determine whether people who have liked the page then even see our updates in their newsfeed. Lots of interaction definitely helps in this regard. So, if you use Facebook, please share our posts [>>](http://www.facebook.com/schulemachtschule), comment to your heart's content and encourage your Facebook friends to like the page too! When things get serious with the construction of the new building, we will need a broad reach. Help us build it!

Search: We're looking for the student who handed over 207.80 EUR at the Musgym office – without leaving her name! She raised the money with a project in connection with her guest school abroad. The note with the girl's contact details cannot be found. Please get in touch, kind donor!



*Letters from sponsors are unpacked ...
... and soon answers are sent*

11) Seeking sponsors – not just for newcomers

The **three new children** at the Jharkot school don't have sponsors yet and would be delighted to have a sponsor family or class. Sponsors pay for the individual costs (food, clothes, medical care) for the child and have contact with them by post. 50EUR per month covers all the personal needs for a child. (The general project donations are used to finance personnel, equipment, energy costs, transport etc). Information on sponsorship can be found on our website under "How can I help?" or [here >>](#)

For **Sonam Wangyal**, who is now in his third year of Tangka painting studies, we are looking for joint sponsors: in Nepalese terms the training costs of 110 EUR are expensive (a small proportion of that is for the school itself, while living costs in Kathmandu constitute the majority). At the moment we are short by 50 EUR per month. Sonam Wangyal was an enthusiastic and perseverant drawer and painter at Jharkot. After he left the school, he took a year off, because a serious problem with his hip meant that he could barely walk. He is mostly free of pain now and is very happy in his training.



Please and thank you

On behalf of the children and everyone involved in the project, we say a big thank you for your interest and support – and hope that it long continues!



Christina Klaffinger

Wolf Pichlmüller

www.schule-macht-schule.at  www.facebook.com/schulemachtschule

Spendenkonto bei der Volksbank Salzburg:

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Today we are woken at 5am by more than 200 high-spirited goats, who are driven through the narrow alleys of Jharkot by a tired herdsman. It's -7°C outside when we climb out of our sleeping bags and leave the unheated room, only to discover that the water pipes have frozen overnight and the notion of teeth cleaning be put on ice for now (ha ha). Wrapped up in three jumpers, we leave the guesthouse and make our way to the gompa [actually the temple, the same word is also used for the monastery and the project school].

Villagers call "Namasté!" to us from every direction, a greeting we cheerfully return as we sidestep the piles of cow dung at the side of the medieval alleys (it is used as fuel). We enter the inner courtyard of the monastery; the children's daily Tibetan morning prayers ring out from the prayer room at full volume, three older students are sitting on the floor cutting vegetables for lunch. Steam rises in the kitchen as Deumaya busily stirs the contents of a huge saucepan. Pema tells us that there will be noodle soup today, which makes me happy because I'm freezing – but Leonie laments that she had been looking forward to fried rice.

After breakfast apples are given out, a special treat that we have learned to appreciate, as the abstinence from sweet food hit us hard at first. The monks have now ventured from their beds and are playing basketball with the children, while simultaneously cleaning their teeth, shaving and washing their hair.

At 9am we set off to the public school, which was built in the wonderfully picturesque setting of a hill plateau. One pays a price for the visual appeal though. The speed at which the children ahead of us spring up the hillside makes me dizzy, as I'm facing a fierce fight against the thin air and exhibiting decreased speed (slow motion). I reach my destination after a bit of delay, the children are already in the middle of ardently singing the Nepalese national anthem and Leonie and I join in breathlessly. We put on sun cream for the fourth time as lesson time begins. After ten minutes everyone is moved out of the sparsely equipped classroom to the playground, as the temperatures inside are at zero.

We spend the first three hours on alphabet, animal species and types of word with the younger classes, while some of the older pupils sit together in a group and knit. My grandmother would be green with envy if she could see the impressive designs and patterns that emerge in the Arts & Crafts lessons. Dhargyal proudly presents the socks he knitted himself, which are duly admired by all. The children have also taken it upon themselves to teach me and Leonie all the different ways that Scoubidou strings can be put together – something in which we are moderately skilled, which the children find very amusing.

We turn to reading fairytales until lunch; today it is Rapunzel's turn. Before we can finish, the morning lessons are over and we run down the hill (more pleasant than going up) back to the gompa. Inspired by all the supernatural, Nani Dolma asks Leonie at lunch whether there are actually unicorns in Austria. Pema wants to know whether dinosaurs have died out in Europe too. Today Leonie tries eating the dal bat with her fingers and does very well.

In the afternoon we walk to the sports field, which turns out to be a huge pasture with a frozen pond. The boys play football and we play baseball with the girls – in the unreal setting of the Himalaya mountain ranges. There is much amusement when Pema ventures out on to the frozen pond, where the ice can no longer take his weight and he sinks waist deep into the water. The grazing cows and horses show only moderate interest in events at first, but gradually move closer and closer, ultimately ending up in the middle of the field, at which point we return home.



... since the temperatures inside are at about zero ...



Tea break together in the kitchen

After prayers we have momos for dinner for the first time. They are pastry pockets filled with vegetables, a wonderful Nepalese speciality. Even just the shape of the pastry pocket is a science in itself!

Although it is unimaginably cold, the kids don't bother putting their socks on! One after the other they all disappear into their rooms with a "Goodnight Miss Leonie and Miss Conzi, have sweet dreams".

Freezing, we make our way back to the guesthouse; above us countless stars, among us complete darkness. Thoughts of the forthcoming cold shower are forgotten and instead we look forward to our sleeping bags, which wait for us invitingly. And since there will be fried rice for breakfast tomorrow, Leonie goes to bed with a smile, while I'm still desperately looking for my hood. And here I end my report, because I certainly won't find it while I'm writing.

Good night!