

**Standby mode**  
**Schule macht Schule Newsletter October 2020**

Dear supporters and friends of the Medical Centre School in Jharkot, dear students and teachers of the Musisches Gymnasium,

Who would have thought a year ago that life would be so fundamentally different this autumn! Ella and Miriam should be in Jharkot right now, teaching the children English, singing and playing with them. They would have been reporting on the simple way of life in the village, telling us about the children and the warm-hearted people in the project, the breathtaking landscape, the hikes to Muktinath and Lubra and visits to the children's families ...

Instead, the project is in standby mode, which we'll tell you about here.



*„...These days most of our medical school are in their own hometown as me. I am currently at my village Tangbe, since covid is increasing day by day in a row, in Nepal, and of course Kathmandu is in the red zone by now, it's dangerous... My family are all doing well, it's our harvesting season here in Mustang.“ (Message from Dolma Gurung, now studying Amchi medicine, 19.10.20)*

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**1) The situation in Nepal**

The pandemic continues to have a hold over Nepal.

The official daily figures for new infections in mid-October are around 4000, with very low capacity for testing. In mid-September, the figure was around 1500 and 600 in mid-August.

Restrictions were eased on a trial basis in the summer, but these changes have now been withdrawn. Movement has been massively restricted; people may only leave their homes for approved reasons. Only diplomats and certain international organisations are permitted to enter Nepal.

Most schools have to remain closed; it doesn't look as though we'll be returning to classes any time soon.

**2) Our project school: on standby**

As we reported in June, our children are with their respective families in their home villages. As far as we know they are all healthy and our project staff are in contact with a number of them: where there is intermittent mobile phone reception, our boarding school mother and Tibetan teacher Tsering Dolkar is able to talk to the children and parents.



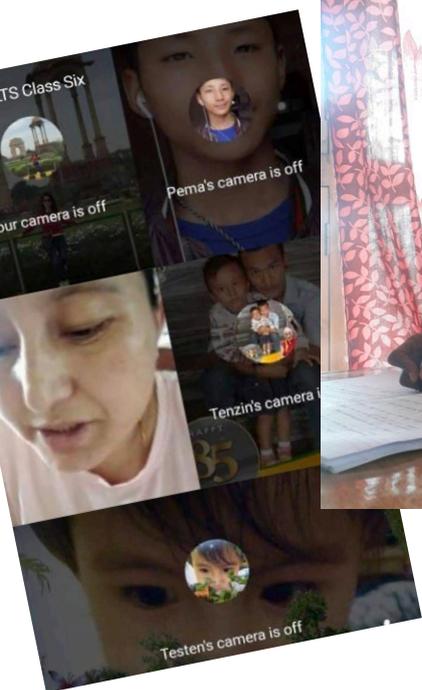
*12-year-old Sonam Dhendup and 14-year-old Tashi Dolma from Tangya are now at home and are working in the fields, as they and their families would expect*

Children from Tangya in Upper Mustang are in a fortunate position: Palsang Lhamo, who has worked for the project since 2019 as a caregiver and teacher, lives in Tangya herself and is holding improvised lessons for the children there. In other villages, older students – under Tsering Dolkar’s “remote supervision” – are helping the younger children to keep track of what they’ve learned. Unfortunately, it’s not possible for every child, so there will be a lot of ground to make up when school starts again!

In Jharkot, kindergarten teacher Dawa and another local are holding reduced classes for the Jharkot kids in the community hall, while the school building serves as quarantine quarters.

Our older protégés at Lekshed Tsal School and SOS Hermann Gmeiner School, as well as those training as Amchis and Tangka painters, are receiving online tuition from their respective institutions, provided they live in a region where the mobile phone connection is sufficient.

In Nepal the new school year begins in April. Due to the lockdown, no children started school in this year and so we had no newcomers at our school. Come the spring, we’ll see what happens for the children who would have been due to move on to the Lekshed Tsal School at that point.



*Top: In addition to providing emergency lessons, Pasang Lhamo also adds a little variety to her protégés lives. Here, Tashi Dolma and Tenzin Tarchin accompany her on a trip*

*Above: Lhamo Tsering (wearing white stripes) is already a student at SOS Hermann Gmeiner School in Pokhara. Aside from completing her own online studies, in her free time she also supports the project children in her village of Phaylak – Yumi, Dicky Dolkar and Tashi Pasang – with their studies*

*Left: Wherever it is possible, online lessons take place over the family mobile phone. The network reception works most of the time for Pema Tsering in Manang and he conscientiously completes his assignments*

### 3) But running beautifully: Amchi medicine

Our Amchi Tenzin Rigdol, who was caught off guard by the lockdown, continues to work in the village. At the request of Upper Mustang, he also spent a few weeks there in September examining and treating hundreds of patients in 13 villages. He and a group of helpers also used the time to gather medicinal plants for stock at Jharkot Medical Centre.



*Amchi Tenzin Rigdol performing pulse diagnosis during his visit to Upper Mustang. Some of the villages can only be reached on horseback and the Amchi's visit is always a big event*



*The queue for withdrawing money: there is often no social distancing*

We are proud to have Amchila as part of the team. His calm, genial nature, medicinal skills, and spiritual faith as a Buddhist monk are a source of physical and emotional support for many people in the region. This also helps to bolster the reputation of the project...

#### 4) And what's happening with the donations now?

All the money that is being donated, but for which there is currently no use is being recorded as carefully as usual so that it will be available for the children when school starts again.

However, even in the current situation there are some necessary expenditures in the budget:

- The prescribed audit by a public accountant, the annual licence renewal for the Nepalese association, and Social Welfare Council taxes all need to be paid.
- Amchi Tenzin Rigdol's wages continue to be paid. There are also costs for travel and for medicines that he cannot produce himself, as well as for other necessary consumer goods.
- Our management team, consisting of Mohan Lama and Tsering Dolkar, is taking care of organisational duties, recesses and all the chicanery by the authorities (just withdrawing money takes nearly two days as a result of the necessary travel permission, confirmation from the Social Welfare Council and then queues at the bank ...). Palsang Lhamo is teaching the kids in Tangya. The three of them also remain on full pay.
- Support staff Anjam as well as sisters Deumaya and Sita (responsible for cooking and laundry) are currently with their families. Since they have no alternative source of income and there is no unemployment insurance, they will remain on half-pay for the foreseeable future. (To give you an idea of numbers: our employees' pay in Nepal is between 80 and 200 Euros per month, x 13, plus food, lodging and travel costs, as well as any health costs incurred.)



*Roughly a year ago in the monastery courtyard in Jharkot – we all fervently hope that the little community will be able to gather together again soon*

#### Please and thank you

We hope that you are all doing well and will come through this time healthy and unscathed (even if perhaps a little changed in one way or another). We'd be delighted if it is possible for you to remain loyal supporters by continuing to show an interest in what we do. On behalf of the children and everyone involved in the project, we thank you for your commitment and for any financial support you are able to give!

Kind regards,

Wolf Pichlmüller

Christina Klaffinger

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