

## Growing together

### Schule macht Schule Newsletter September 2024

Dear supporters and friends of Schule macht Schule's project in Nepal, dear students, parents and teachers at the Musisches Gymnasium,

This report has been a long time coming, but that's not to say that nothing's been happening: quite the contrary!

It was family reasons (and not particularly positive ones) that led to the newsletter being put on the backburner. The children in Nepal and the project shouldn't suffer under the private stress factors, so priorities had to be set. But now we're at the point where we can take the time to share experiences and news with you.

One more thing before we start: there are still vacancies for volunteers in Nepal, for curious people of any age who love adventure. Please keep your eyes and ears open and let other people know. There's more information in the previous letter, which you can read [here >>](#)

And as always, happy reading!

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You can see above how close the little boarding school and Children's Village have become: during the Hindu festival of Krishna Janmashtami (birth of the god Krishna), our (Buddhist) Sonam Wangchen and young Ritu from the Children's Village play the roles of the gods Krishna and Radha.

Below left: View from the street of the residential building, our Haus Mustang

## 1. Three weeks in Mustang House

Back in Nepal – in March. As the taxi brings us to Bha-kunde, we are holding our breath: here are the first houses of the settlement, there is the junction for the Children's Village and here, between the haystacks and banana plants, comes the first view of the winter school: for the first time we see the renovated school and the new residential building in reality!

The children and teachers are waiting for us behind the gate. As soon as we've said hello, the little ones take us by the hand and lead us through the whole house. We have to see everything – the kitchen, the bedrooms, the bathrooms, the dining room. The children's pride and joy are palpable.

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The local carpenter built the furniture right behind Mustang House, using termite-resistant sal tree wood.



Our former student Ngawang Tsering painted the wall design in the dining and prayer room free of charge; the shrine was donated by former student Jeewan.



Our Pasang Wangmo on her way to second place in the Children's Village's cross-country race

As we are about to descend the outside steps from the first floor, 10-year-old Pavi Jung tightens his grip on my hand, steps ahead of me and says: "Miss Christina, walk very carefully!" It's a perfectly normal staircase and not wet. "Why?" I ask, a little confused. "Because you are old", Pavi Jung explains. "That's right", I reply somewhat perplexed and proceed very carefully ...

The next three weeks are packed with discussions and experiences, and we are amazed how well the residents of Mustang House and the Children's Village have integrated: there are football matches between the children from the Children's Village and Mustang House; we are invited to the annual party at the Himali school, which is affiliated with the Children's Village and where our children dance; accounts are checked, salary adjustments discussed.



Health check at the Children's Village

In front of a big crowd our children perform dances of their Tibetan ethnic group



The Mustang House XI (in yellow and blue) against the Children's Village team: a valiant effort, but they didn't stand a chance







Finally, Mustang House is officially inaugurated: with blessings from monks from the nearby monastery, with speeches and dance performances by the project children, traditional khapse pastries and tea for the entire Children's Village and guests of honour. Nearly all our former pupils (project children who now attend senior schools, supported by Schule macht Schule) came to take part. They made the decorations for the party and danced for the audience too ...

*The slightly sweet traditional khapse pastry, a traditional festival snack: a lot of work to provide for about 130 people!*

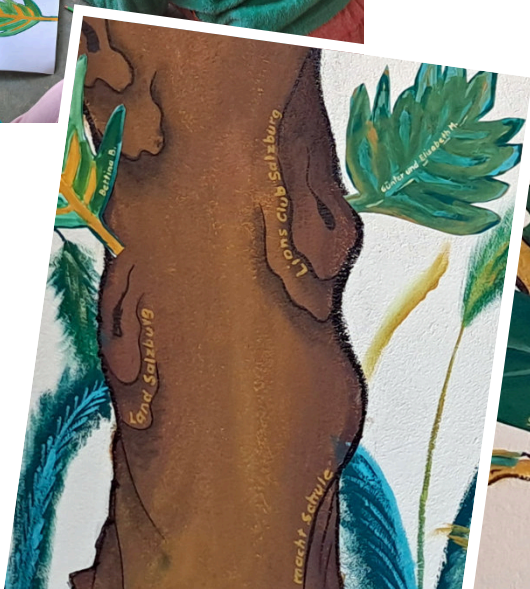
*After the blessing of Mustang House, the Lama hands out blessed rice to the children and staff.*



## 2. Growing a special plant

So now the house is standing – thanks to the help from many people. These people should be visible, so where should the obligatory marble plaque be mounted?

No, we want a living thing that reflects our community. We sit at the big table in the dining room and agree upon the house tree. Together with some of the older children, former student Nga-wang Tsering, creator of the traditional wall painting in the dining room, paints the trunk, branches and twigs of a room-high tree on the last bare wall of the room. All the children create leaves, as varied as the people involved in the project. The trunk and branches represent the “big” supporters of Mustang House and right at literal grass-roots level stands “Schule macht Schule”, representing everyone who makes the





continuation of the project possible with their contributions. Written in the leaves are the first names and initials of those who made dedicated donations towards the new building. All this – trunk, branches, leaves – feeds the fruits: the children who live and learn in Mustang House. Their portraits bloom from the buds of the tree and there are still many closed buds for future fruits ...

### 3. Obstruction before construction

In the last newsletter we reported that the monastery in Jharkot was no longer providing any space for the boarding school. Then in April came the news that the owner of the house, which we had rented for teaching purposes, had died and his descendants intended to put the building to other uses. The piece of land in Jharkot that Palgen would have given us is too small for the hostel AND school.

So we are on the lookout once more for a home for the summer school in the mountains; there is intense preparatory work and it may ultimately lead us away from Jharkot to another village in the region. Whatever happens, we will continue!

Why do we need a building up in Mustang when we have the winter school in Bhakunde? Since it's not possible to teach in elevated areas during a Himalayan winter, Schule macht Schule brings the children down to the valley to Mustang House in Bhakunde for a few months. However, in the warmer months they should continue to live in their native cultural environment and closer to their families.



*On a trip to the sandy banks of Pardi Khola neither the search for a piece of land, nor the completion of the dream house trouble the mind*

### 4. Farewell into the future

In April Lhakpa Wangmo and Palsang Lhamo completed their Matura / A Level exams at the SOS Hermann Gmeiner Higher Secondary School in Pokhara – in Nepal they are comprehensive central written exams and the results are not published until August (both did very well).

At this point, support from Schule macht Schule ends for these two girls. Mind you, if they explain their plans and family resources in detail, they can apply for (partial) support for the first steps on their new path. Lhakpa Wangmo wants to become a qualified nurse, Palsang Lhamo is taking English courses to increase her chances of getting a scholarship to study in the USA. She wrote to us:

*Dear Miss Christina and Mr Wolf ☺,*

*I hope this note finds you well. I wanted to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for all the support and guidance you and my godparents have provided me until now. Your assistance has been invaluable, and I truly appreciate everything you've done to help me reach my goals.*

*Lhakpa Wangmo 2013, 2018 and 2024*

*Palsang Lhamo 2013, 2018 and 2024*

*Schule macht Schule has accompanied these two youngsters for 12 years – we've all really grown together!*





*I want to let you know that I have learned so much from your mentorship and support, and I am now confident in moving forward on my own. Your belief in me has been a driving force, and I am excited to take the next steps.*

*Please know that your kindness and generosity will always be remembered. I truly value our connection and will make sure to keep in touch. Thank you once again for everything. Let's stay connected.*

*Warm regards, Palsang Lhamo*

*This year our students completed the first in a series of career guidance workshops.*

*The team from CDN (Career Disha Nepal) put together two tailor-made interactive days for classes 8-12, full of information, self-awareness and hands-on group work.*

*We intend to continue this useful cooperation.*



## 5. Some leave and others arrive ...



During this visit we were able to attend the graduation event, since the school year ends in March/April in Nepal. In each Nepalese school class the results of the end of year exams are ranked, the results are announced and the three highest-scoring students from each class are presented with a small gift (school book and pen) and a round of applause. We introduced a new award for the greatest improvement in comparison to the previous term's score. Now the children with less potential for academic achievement have a chance of being honoured too. There was a child with an especially big smile on their face!

Four others accepted their certificates with mixed feelings: Yumi Dolkar, Bipan, Dickyi Dolkar and Pasang Mentok, who completed Class 5 at the project school and are now attending the Mount Kailash School, supported by Schule macht Schule and with financial security from their godparents. Thank you so much!

These are our five newcomers:



*Dolm Lama is 11 years old. She comes from Sankharapur, where her mother works in a canteen to provide for her three children. Her new friend, Chhuying Dolma, comes from Dagarzong. Her brother has been with us for a few years now.*

*Lhakyi Dolma will soon turn 7 years old. She comes from Pangling and her mother is working as a cook in Jomsom. Like most of our children's parents, her father is a small-scale farmer.*



*They are now in the same boat: 6-year-old Dawa Dhendup from Chharta Tangsong in the Dolpo region (left) and 7-year-old Sonam Wangchen from Putak in the valley of Jharkot*

*Both boys come from farming families*



They all already have godparents, who are supporting and keeping in contact with them through Schule macht Schule.



We are looking for support for Lhakpa Tsering, who has been in the project since April 2012 and is now in Class 12 at the *SOS Hermann Gmeiner Higher Secondary School*. His sponsoring class has provided for him until they reached their own Matura exams, the parallel graduating class 8e had money left over and took over the period until October, but would now like to pass the baton. Could someone take on a short-term patronage? It's a matter of 50 EUR per month, starting immediately, if at all possible, until April 2025 – with a possible small helping hand once he graduates from school.

For more information, please contact us: [team@schule-macht-schule.at](mailto:team@schule-macht-schule.at)



*Lhakpa Tsering in Jharkot in 2013, and at the consecration ceremony for House Mustang in 2024*



## 6. Nyima Tsering takes over the kitchen, and a machine takes over the laundry

Sita and Tirsana, in charge of the kitchen and laundry, have left the project, literally overnight – two days before our arrival. Fortunately, Nyima Tsering was prepared to step into the breach for the three weeks leading up to the holidays – during the holidays there would then be enough time to find a replacement. Nyima had quit his job at a monastery in Kathmandu, where he had cooked (alone!) for 200 monks every day. His plan was to find a job in Dubai; he had already invested all his savings in finding a placement. Such a shame! Nyima is a fantastic cook, and his warm, peaceful personality made us feel like he had been part of the team for a long time.

And he seemed to feel the same way. He has given up his plan to go to Dubai in order to stay with us permanently.

### Welcome to the team!

We then all decided that while Nyima can manage the kitchen alone, but not the laundry as well, so we would then buy a 10kg washing machine. Luckily, the new house had been equipped with a washing machine connection. And since we were on the subject of machines: there are fitted carpets in two rooms of the school building (which we had adapted in 2022), which are only ever swept and in spite of all efforts, are more than dusty. It wasn't easy to persuade the team that money should be spent on a vacuum cleaner. An unnecessary luxury! It was only when we said that we would ask for donations for this specific item and not touch the sundry budget that there was a consensus.

So now we hope that we can follow through and that perhaps a few donations for the vacuum cleaner will come from our readers ...

And should they amount to more than the cost of the vacuum cleaner: we've managed thus far without a fridge, but during the hot summers in Bhakunde, the leftovers from lunch can spoil by the evening without being refrigerated, and vegetables can only be bought in very small portions. So that's why any excess vacuum cleaner money would immediately become refrigerator money. Would you like to contribute a little to this?



*For Nyima, the way to the childrens' hearts wasn't just through their stomachs: he's also a new adult friend to them.*



*Left, top to bottom:*

*Teachers and children harvest saag, a leafy green vegetable, from the house's vegetable garden.*

*When momos are on the menu, there's always plenty of help available. On this day the mothers of the newly registered children lent a hand too.*

*Vegetarian momos with home-grown saag – there's even a taster cooked in oil. Mmmm!*

## 7. The thing about tax reduction in Austria ...

In February we enthusiastically sent out a celebratory message, underestimating bureaucratic processes:

*"Due to the new, finally more straightforward regulations for the deductibility of donations to charities, we will be able to report your donations made from 1 January, 2024 to the tax office!"*



At that point in time the details for the procedures were not yet clear, however, a number of our supporters registered their interest with us and provided their information. Shortly thereafter followed the difficulties with the quarters in Jharkot and the necessity of adapting the Schule macht Schule statutes in order to be able to apply for the benefit.

The first step was the mention of certain paragraphs and water-tight formulations (many thanks to lawyer Felix König, who assisted us pro bono). More important was the point that instead of the cooperation with the association in Jharkot, the cooperation with the succeeding association in our future "home village" needed to be added to the statutes – and this association is still in the process of being founded. We are still working on meeting the requirements that will lead to official approval.

We believe we're nearly there, although the deadline within which retroactive inclusion from the beginning of 2024 would have been possible has long since passed. This means that donations will only be eligible from the time we receive notification of the benefit. We hope for your trust and patience!



*Right, top to bottom:*

*After the health check at the Children's Village, four of our children headed to the dentist in Pokhara. Sonam Tsering clearly found it fun ...*

*Last year's Class 2e at the Musisches Gymnasium donated money for books. Among the English books bought in Kathmandu was "The Very Hungry Caterpillar". By the way, a little additional book money would be great!*

*The youngest children practise using scissors with volunteer Klaus.*

*Tsering Gonpo is always on hand when there's manual work to be done. Here he's installing the curtain rings for the new curtains in the dining/prayer room.*



## 8. ... and in Germany

There are two possibilities for our donors in Germany:

1. Schule macht Schule can confirm your donations. We are registered as a non-profit organisation in Austria. In Austria that's not sufficient, you also require a donation benefit certificate. In Germany, the non-profit status may be enough:

*"In Germany, donations to charitable organisations up to a certain amount are generally deductible as special expenses in the income tax return. Since 2010, this also applies to foreign donations to charitable organisations from EU and EEA member states, but not from third countries. (...)*

*Foreign donations are only deductible in Germany for residents if the charitable donation recipient based abroad fulfils the requirements of German charitable law and donors can prove this to the German tax office.*

*These requirements include, for example, the legal form of the organisation and the specific articles of association drawn up for the particular purpose." (Source>>)*

Some of our supporters have already tried this and added our confirmation to their tax records; it's evidently worked so far. So if anyone needs such a confirmation, please send us an email by the end of the year. We'll then take care of it at the beginning of 2025!

2. You can also donate directly to a German partner association, **Förderverein Freundeskreis Jharkot-Projekt e.V.** This association in Murr has been connected to the project since 2007 and almost every year makes a considerable contribution to the annual budget. Our thanks go to Chairwoman Claudia Canz, who has visited the project several times, and all her colleagues!

*Donation account:*

*Jharkot-Projekt e.V. | Kreissparkasse Ludwigsburg*

*IBAN: DE93 6045 0050 0030 0580 91 | BIC: SOLADES1LBG*





If you donate there, please add "SmS" or "Schule macht Schule" to the reference – then we'll know that you are still on board, and we haven't scared off a faithful donor.

**Attention:** if you pay tax in Germany and don't make an "ordinary" donation, but rather have sponsorship and would prefer to make a transfer to the German association in future, please **make sure you contact us first:** [team@schule-macht-schule.at](mailto:team@schule-macht-schule.at).

*"We are generation restoration": Children from House Mustang and the Children's Village gather before a march on World Environment Day 2024.*



### Thank you and please

Your trust and interest in the project delight us and as always on behalf of the children and everyone involved in the project, we say a huge thank you for your financial support!

Christina offered to mark the children's English exams and came across Dicky Dolkar's text about her school. We're happy to share this with all our readers:

vice principal is Mrs Tsering Dolkar.  
teaches us Tibetan and math subject. Our  
teacher teaches serophero and nepali subject  
Tashi teaches social studies and science  
was didi Sita Rhuda Magar and Tirsana  
new the job and now we have Mr Mima  
we had our summer school in Mustang  
school in Mustang. Last time we have  
Rhakunde. But now we have two buildings  
and beautiful. I am so glad to have a this  
lucky to have school like this. Teacher like  
now we have Mr Nyima as our cook.

*In the world there are so many schools. School is the place where all the students, teachers and principal study and teach. School is the main place to get education for all the students. Now I would like to say about my school: (...) There are twenty students and five staff. We are just like a family. Our head is Miss Christina and chair person is Mr Wolf. Our principal is Mr Mohan and our vice principal is Mrs Tsering Dolkar. She also teaches us Tibetan and math subject. Miss Tsering Choedon teaches serophero and Nepali subject to us, and Mr. Pasang Tashi teaches social studies and science. Our cooks' names were didi Sita and didi Tirsana. They threw their job and now we have Mr Nyima as our cook. (...) Now we have two buildings. It is so cool and beautiful. I am so glad to have this school. I am so lucky that I have school like this, teacher like them and all my friends. I like my school very much.*

Kind regards

*Pichl-müller*

Wolf Pichlmüller

*Christina Klaffinger*

Christina Klaffinger



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