

Solidarity

Schule macht Schule Newsletter June 2020

Dear supporters and friends of the Medical Centre School in Jharkot, dear students and teachers at the Musisches Gymnasium, The world has changed since our last newsletter in January, as has life for our children in Nepal. In this report, we'll share with you what we know about the situation for the people who are part of the project.

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1) No return after the holidays

As always, winter school in Pokhara was full of new experiences for the children: swimming in the river, riding on the bus (for some it was their first time), eating mandarins, lessons beneath the porch roof of the former restaurant in which the boarding school is housed, visits to the dentist, walking to the Peace Stupa. And a fairground! ... News of corona came. The first Covid-19 case in Nepal was confirmed on 23rd January, the second came a month later.

In the first week of March, the winter school closed as planned, and things were meant to kick off again in Jharkot in mid-April. The children were fetched – one parent from each village takes home all the children who live in the same place. Our colleagues travelled home to their families.

Then came the lockdown:

- On 19th March all lessons and exams were cancelled, initially just until the end of April, but now until further notice. Our friend, Jay Prakash Pal, school director in Kathmandu, says that lessons in schools probably won't be allowed until September at the earliest.
- On 24th March the national lockdown went into effect, with strict limits on free movement.

We know that all our children are with their families and are in good health.

The daily reports from the Nepalese MoHP (Ministry of Health and Population) are available in an English PDF: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QhLMbT76t6Zu1sFy5qIB5aoDbHVAcnHx>.



The terrace of the improvised winter school quarters: classroom, dining room, art exhibition...



At the river there's bathing, laundry to do ... and fun to have

In recent days the infection rate has increased massively; today, on 1st June, Nepal has 1,811 confirmed cases (new cases today: 239; deaths so far: 8).

The age range of those infected is interesting: approximately 40% are 20-30 years old; those over 50 years make up only approximately 5% of cases. This, as well as the so far low mortality rate, could well be connected to Nepal's very young population.

The districts of Mustang, Dolpa and Manang, which are home to our children, have so far remained corona-free.

Most of the confirmed cases are in the provinces that share a border with India. Rupandehi district is badly hit and this is where our cook and washerwoman, sisters Deumaya and Sita, are. They and their family are healthy.



Frisch ausgetriebene Saat in Jharkot

Our Tibetan doctor, Amchi Tenzin Rigdol, was in Jharkot to check on the surgery when lockdown was ordered. Since then he has been stuck in Jharkot: a piece of good fortune for the inhabitants of the surrounding area ...

Since Mustang is currently free of corona cases, the local authorities are being very strict in their implementation of the government's requirements. During the first four weeks of lockdown, nobody was allowed to leave their own village. Even people from the neighbouring village with urgent needs were only able to consult the Amchi with special permission. House visits were also rarely possible. After this 4 week period, the radius of movement was extended to the six villages in the valley in important cases.

Amchi Tenzin Rigdol is now serving the entire valley. Some of the important ingredients for the botanical Tibetan medicines are in danger of running out. Jabyang Thakuri, a community councillor from Jharkot, is stuck in Kathmandu and hopes to receive permission in the coming days to return home. Project manager Mohan is organising a delivery of replenishments of medicine by phone and these will then be brought to Jharkot by Jabyang.

Amchi Tenzin Rigdol performing pulse diagnosis



Neighbourhood help in Kathmandu: The Thamel Gaa Hiti Youth Club distributes food to residents of the district who have lost their income due to corona

(This is to illustrate the situation; we know the organizers of the association, but the youth club is not supported by Schule macht Schule)

2) The stranded Amchi and life in the valley

There are currently more people in the villages than usual with people who made out of Kathmandu in time to return to their relatives in the countryside. 20-25% of residents have apparently left the capital!



3) Online Teaching in complicated circumstances

Mohan and boarding school manager Tsedol are with their families in the Jampaling Tibetan Camp, about 30 km from Pokhara. People there are only allowed to go out for a few hours each week for food shopping fresh fruit and vegetables are no longer available. How can the needs of daily life be met during an extended lockdown?

Tsedol is keeping in touch with all the children as far as is possible – the lack of internet access makes it difficult. We at least know that they are all healthy. Older children who have gone on to other schools are taking care of the younger project children in their villages, on Tsedol's behalf. Contact is being maintained as well as possible via smartphone.



Tsering Pemba, Dolma Tsering, Tashi Dolma and Tsering Lhamo, when they were among our young children. Now they're helping the younger ones during lockdown.

- In Jharkot Lhakpa Wangmo and Dolma Tsering senior are helping Dolma Tsering junior, Shanti and Karma with their studying and practising.
- In Tangya Tashi Dolma and Pasang Lhamo are doing the same for Sonam Dhendup and Tenzin Tarchin.
- Tsering Lhamo and Tsering Pemba are teaching the younger kids in Phaylak: Tashi Pasang, Tenzin Tsewang, Tsering Yangdon, Yumi and Dickyi Dolkar.
- Tsering Dawa and Pasang Mentok in Kagbeni are being supported by a girl from the neighbouring village, who is in Class 10. This has been organised by Tsering Dawa's father.
- The children who attend Lekshed Tsal School, or should have headed there in April, are being given work via mobile phone. This is working for Pemba Lhamo, and Doma Tsering senior in Jharkot, and, more recently, for Pasang Choedon in Gyakar.
- For some of the children in very isolated villages, the situation is not yet resolved. We hope that a solution can be found for them too.

When school starts again – whenever this is possible – a main task will be re-integrating all these different learning experiences.

Please and thank you

The current situation demands something from us all. For some, that something is a great deal. We hope that you are all fine and not just in terms of your health ...

We would be delighted if it is possible for you to continue supporting the project.

Currently, project work is of course reduced. We are supporting our "unemployed" collegues with 50% of their salary. The Amchi, Mohan and Tsedol are still working and receiving full pay. We don't yet know how school fees for our older children will be offset. Neither do we know what will come if we are able to run the school and boarding school again, but there is a continued shortage of goods.

Perhaps this truly unlucky country will get off lightly this time. We are hoping for the best!

On behalf of the children and everyone involved in the project, we thank you all very much for your interest and all your support.

Kind regards,

Wolf Pichlmüller

Christina Klaffinger

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