



## Setting a new course

*Schule macht Schule Newsletter September 2022*

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

We had the jeep drop us off in the village of Kinga, drank milk and ate biscuits with Lopsang Wangmo and then – although there's now a road – we walked the last stretch to Jharkot. Not only for nostalgic reasons, but because this final leg of the journey is so wonderful to walk.

The children were waiting for us on the steep steps of the monastery: welcome in Nepali, Tibetan and English. And in the courtyard, a surprise: pupils from Classes 2 and 3 dancing to music played on a mobile phone. What a reception!

After an absence of almost 3 years due to the coronavirus, we (Wolf and Christina) were back in Nepal. A spring visit for the first time (we froze!) and with exciting plans, not just up in Jharkot, but in Kathmandu and Pokhara too, where we were focused on the realisation of the long-held dream of a building of our own.

We'll tell you all about it in this newsletter, as well as a little about the everyday life of the children and the challenges and successes in the project. As always: happy reading!

*Welcoming us at the (by us) so-called killer stairs*



*The new thermic solar plant on the mud roof of our living quarters*

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*Clean according to shower schedule: each child can now have a hot shower once a week*

## 1. Warm water!

The solar panel on the roof of our residential section of the monastery broke beyond repair before the coronavirus lockdown. That meant that personal hygiene was reduced to a tub of gently warmed water in the courtyard. Or showering with cold water – and the water is really cold there. And if that wasn't enough, pipes weren't watertight, the drainage from the toilets was getting worse and worse ...

During our stay in May the materials for repairing the sanitary installations was delivered, as was the new solar array. And now everything is finished and the children can shower happily again. A big thank you to all the donors who made this possible, in particular the Catholic confirmation group from Wals!



## 2. Separation of table and bed, plus a job for a joiner

Our meeting with the management, teachers and school committee of the public school in Jharkot was somewhat gruelling. (The committee is something like our parents' association).

We've been trying since 2014 to improve the academic situation for all children in the village in collaboration with the public school. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to establish an equal partnership. Our personnel had to constantly mitigate personnel problems in the public school, decisions were not made together, promises were not kept, the negative effect on our children's academic success and their willingness to learn was obvious. Ultimately, in December 2020, we insisted on a separation of the two schools. The other side provisionally accepted it for a year and then we were being persuaded to return. We rejected this once and for all and made it clear that we would now only continue the project with the boarding school and Amchi clinic in Jharkot as a permanently independent institution.



*Half-year exams at the new tables in classroom 1 for all – when someone feels uncertain about something, the teachers may even point them towards the solution of the task*

We reported back in December 2021 that we had rented a house right below the monastery for separate lessons. Better lighting has since been installed, the rooms are cosier and we've had flat tables made at a little joinery in Kagbeni. Why no "proper" tables and chairs? We have seen how limber even elderly people remain when they spend their lives crouching, instead of getting used to the western style of sitting on chairs. So we want our children to sprawl and slouch the way their spines demand ...

## 3. A workshop becomes a school and a new house is made

Finally, we no longer have to search for quarters for 20 children and five members of staff year after year! Finally, the cooking pots, mattresses, curtains and gas tanks that are stored over the summer no longer have to be hauled about! Finally, we have a home in winter too!



Our children live and learn in Jharkot from April until October. Come winter, like almost all the village residents, the boarding school looks for better shelter in the valley, near Pokhara. So far it's been in improvised quarters: sometimes a big family in urgent need of money would make room, sometimes it would be a disused restaurant ... Mattresses would be set out on the floor to sleep and tidied away every day to make room for lessons. The kitchen would be improvised; the precarious water situation meant bathing in the river (which the children thought was great).

And now our little ones can look forward to a permanent home in the cold months! We found a partner: the FWHC\* children's village has given us use of an empty workshop on friendly terms for the school and right next to it is a plot of land where we can build a boarding school: our future Mustang House.

\* FWHC : Forum for the Welfare of Himalayan Children, the Nepalese branch of the German association Freundeskreis Nepalhilfe e.V.

(>> [www.nepalhilfe.de](http://www.nepalhilfe.de))



*Above, left: The FWHC Team showing us the solar power plant, which will also provide us with electricity*

*Below: Situated to the left of the entrance gate of the children's village, the former workshop building, which will be converted according to our needs*

The old building will be renovated for the coming winter – for at least this winter it will have to serve as both winter living quarters and school. It needs a new roof, the sanitation will be repaired and expanded, the shutters of the former workshop will be replaced by walls with doors and windows, giving us a kitchen and classrooms. *Schule macht Schule* will bear the costs, while the FWHC will organise the building work.

In parallel, architect Christoph Brandstätter, who has long accompanied *Schule macht Schule*, is planning the future living quarters of the winter school. More on that next time!

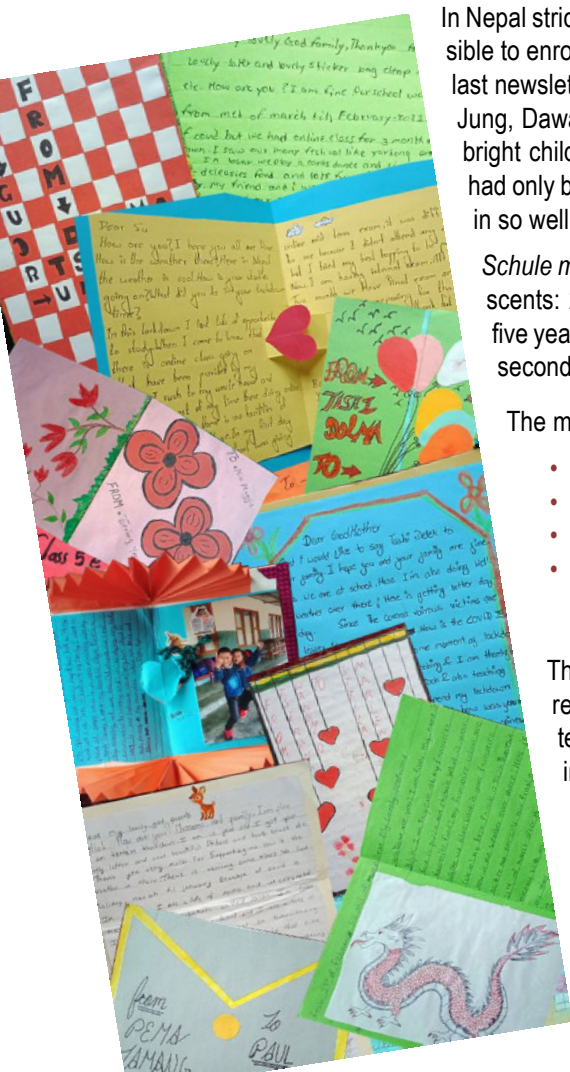


*Above: The disused building at the end of April: a spacious hall and two tiny rooms on the upper floor, and on the ground floor, four workshops with metal rolling shutters and storerooms behind*

*Right: Early September: The shutters have been replaced with walls; doors and windows of the future classrooms are currently being installed*



#### 4. Dear godparents, dear godclass, I am fine!



In Nepal strict lockdowns shaped the year 2020 and so it was not possible to enrol new children. We introduced the children of 2021 in the last newsletter and in May 2022 they were joined by four more: Pavi Jung, Dawa Sangmo, Kunga Tashi, Konchok Bhutic – all adorable, bright children. When we arrived in Jharkot, the youngest of them had only been at the boarding school for two weeks, but had settled in so well that they didn't seem like newcomers at all.

*Schule macht Schule* currently provides for 40 children and adolescents: 20 at the boarding school and 20 more, who after their five years of primary school in the project are now attending good secondary school or completing vocational training.

The majority of our children have godparents, including:

- Four classes from the Musisches Gymnasium
- Six teachers
- Ten families with links to the school and
- 13 godparents from other walks of life (from as far afield as Great Britain!).

Their contributions secure the individual needs of the children in the long term. They have twice-yearly contact by letter with their respective godchildren and are a fixed point in their lives.

And if you were keeping count: that's right, there are seven children who don't yet have a godparent! They are the four new students from this year, two from the previous year, and Tsering Mentok, who is now in Class 8 at SOS Hermann Gmeiner Higher Secondary School.



*A new addition: pet of the family Kunga Tashi...*

*... and extra communicative and inquisitive Dawa Sangmo*





*Tsering Mentok, for whom we wish loving godparents. She is the second child from her family under the care of Schule macht Schule*

Her godparent class graduated two years ago and the students have scattered to the four winds. The contributions saved up as a precaution have now been used up.

So we're looking for godparents – urgently. Two groups of friends in Bavaria, which have each supported one of our protégés for years now, came up with a great opportunity for a godparent: they share the financial burden and contact is maintained by whomever wishes within the group ...

Information on becoming a godparent is here: [www.schule-macht-schule.at/jharkot/pdf/Patenkind-Info-ausfuehrlich-en.pdf](http://www.schule-macht-schule.at/jharkot/pdf/Patenkind-Info-ausfuehrlich-en.pdf)

Or you can just send us an [email](#) >>.



*Two other new arrivals: Konchok Bhutic, a quietly happy girl...  
... and self-confident and style conscious Pavi Jung*



*Amchi assistant Norbu Tsering also gets along nicely with the kids (above)*

*The new teacher Tsering Choedon is thrilled about the paper roses made in class*



## 5. New members of the team

We didn't just meet new children, there were also new faces among the project employees:

cook and laundress Sita is still with us, but is now supported by her capable younger sister Tirsana (Deumaya did not return to the project after the pandemic).

The Amchi assistant Anjam has been replaced by Norbu Tsering, who – aside from his responsibilities in making medicines and caring for patients – takes the Amchi to patients in other villages on the pillion seat of his motorbike.

And last but not least we have a new teacher, Tsering Choedon. Her younger sister is one of our protégés, now in Class 11 at the SOS Hermann Gmeiner Higher Secondary School. Her parents' house is in Jharkot and since the family is in a state of emergency



*Young cook Tirsana in the tiny kitchen, where she and her sister whip up great meals, not seldom for more than 30 people*

– the father is unable to work due to ill health – the other members of staff take the load off her so that she can help her mother with field work right after lessons have ended. Tsering Choedon is nonetheless a true bundle of energy, it's impossible to imagine her in a bad mood!

## 6. Adventure-seekers, raise your hands!

In July and August volunteers were able to go to work in the project for the first time since the pandemic: teacher Ines and civil servant Philipp taught English, arts and computer basics and even pitched in with mathematics lessons.

*A good week after our departure from Salzburg we were over the moon to finally see Jharkot on our last day of trekking, far off in the valley. Of course there was a bit of nervousness too – how would it be with the kids, would they like us? What would life be like*



*The children are intrigued: with repaired old laptops Philipp teaches them the basics of using computers*

*in the village and at the school? Will we be able to manage for two months?*

*After our second day here in the village, I can say with absolute certainty that YES, we will manage and time will fly like the wind in Kali Gandaki valley.*

... and so it did! The pair have now returned home, full of new experiences and with a different outlook on life (more from Ines' and Phillip's report is in the appendix).

The volunteers are enormously important for the children in the project, for their knowledge of English and for their communication and social skills. They introduce new subjects and unexpected points of view, they allow the tireless staff to take a break from time to time and help us to accompany developments in the project up close. Two volunteers can work simultaneously in the project. From November to January we have one slot open and before and after that we mostly have two vacancies.

So – do you perhaps know someone who may be interested? Perhaps you could share our information. *Schule macht Schule* doesn't ask money for the delegation and mentoring of volunteers. Just write an **email >>** for detailed information!



*Sometimes it's warmer outside than inside – Ines teaching on the roof terrace*

## 7. Alumni club in statu nascendi

As always we met up with almost all the older children who, supported by *Schule macht Schule*, are now at secondary school, pursuing vocational training, or are self-employed.

We invited the Kathmandu group (the ones now studying there) to share a meal with us and after an extensive exchange of “do you remember when Mr Emil ...” and “the best thing was getting letters”, everyone quietened down. Sonam Tsering, who is studying Amchi medicine, made a little speech in which he thanked *Schule macht Schule* for all its support – not just for his “generation”, but on behalf of the new children too. And now, as so many of them are so close to becoming independent, they had decided that – no matter where life takes them – they would like to support the project in the future be it with their time, money or know-how.

“If we start this *now*, the new ones will join when time comes and the project support group will grow. If we *don't* start it, it will be much more difficult to achieve later on. It has to become a tradition *now*.”

We were dumbfounded and delighted: it's just what we wished for. A good life for these young people, and for them somehow to pass on what they had received.

## 8. Please and thank you

Since the last newsletter in March, a harsh wind has been blowing even in our privileged lives. We hope that you are all keeping well and that you come through this challenging time with your health and without great difficulties.

We are delighted by your continuing loyalty to the project and that you continue to bless us with your interest and trust. For that, and any possible financial support, we say thank you in the name of the children and everyone involved in the project!

With kind regards

Wolf Pichlmüller

Christina Klaffinger

PS: From time to time we hear that our newsletter has landed in someone's spam folder. Adding our email address to your whitelist will prevent this from happening.

### **Voicemail from Tsedol (Tsering Dolkar)**

*A group of parents gave our staff in Nepal a wonderful sign of appreciation – project manager and boarding school mother Tsedol told us about it via Messenger Voicemail (Saturday is the Nepalese Sunday...):*

Last Saturday the parents from Kagbeni and Phaylak they came to our school. They had collected the money and bought buff meat, onion, tomatoes and carrot, and they cooked lunch for us. Yeah, this is the first time...

They came to school in the morning and they made momos for all of us for lunch, and they ate with us. And they also spent time with their kids until four pm.



*Guests making Momos for our staff and kids: around 300 dumplings have to be stuffed and steamed in the tower of steamer inserts (right-hand side)*

### **From Ines' news:**



*Baseball on the Lhadup meadow...*

Our first day of school was a Buddhist holiday, which is why we walked to the “ground” with the children and two members of staff. The “ground” is a huge flat field among otherwise steep terrain. It was very helpful for us, because the children were able to slowly approach us on the walk and while playing baseball. Then before you knew it, they all wanted to sit next to us and be in the same team as us.

After an inning of baseball and a football match, we two delegates were pretty out of breath – you mustn't forget that Jharkot is 3560m above sea level. You need to take a breather just when you've climbed the short flight of steps to the school ...

The kids were super happy when we later gave them envelopes with photos from Christina and Wolf's last visit to Jharkot. So happy in fact that the music was turned up and even our fledgling Sonam started to dance. By the way, his name means “the lucky one”, as an older Sonam told me. (...)

The newly-introduced computer class has delighted pupils in classes 4 and 5 and we helped them become acquainted with working on a computer. Most of them had never held a mouse or had to enter a password, to say nothing of type a story. It was particularly exciting for



*Collecting medicinal herbs. At lower altitudes even the little ones participate, but at 4000m or above it's only the bigger ones.*

the students to find their own houses on Google Maps. When they asked what our king looked like, a Google Image search for various Habsburgs and Empress Sisi followed. (...)

On Saturday, we'll be heading off towards Lhadup to look for medicinal herbs with everybody. That's sure to be fun. Yesterday I took medicines to the Prakash family and happened to have Big Norbu (assistant to the Amchi) with me as an interpreter. They were really pleased to see us and invited us to stay for a cup of tea ...

### **... and from Phillip's article for the Oberalmer Marktblatt:**

When the sky was clear we saw the wonderful starry sky, which, thanks to low air pollution and night-time power cuts, showed more stars than I've ever seen before. We saw the Milky Way, the Andromeda Galaxy and even Jupiter or Saturn.

(...)

We went to the nearby pilgrimage destination of Muktinath a few times, where we ran through the ice-cold holy water fountains.

(...)

The many prayer flags, temples, eight-thousander mountains, and the friendly people are all part of the very simple and yet wonderful life up there in the mountains. Whether it's a tractor driver, who gives you a ride after a long day looking for roots for the Amchi and asks you in for a cup of tea, or locals showing you how to make momo dumplings ...

Or Palgen, the manager of the guest house where we stayed, who didn't hesitate when he heard that I'd got lost coming down a five-thousander in the dark and came to get me on his motorbike. Everything came together to create a wonderful atmosphere that was with me day and night.



Good bye!  
Namaste!  
Tashi delek!

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