

Newsletter 5 2004

30th November 2004

I am sitting on a rock on piece of land just above the school and I am looking out over the surrounding mountains and jungle ..... a wonderful view!

The great news is that we are going to buy this plot of land to build our own school in the near future.

There are different reasons for this, one being the fact that we are growing again in the coming school year and the current building will soon be too small to accommodate us all. In 2005 we will welcome again 10 new children for our nursery class: 5 children as day scholars from the local village and 5 children for our hostel. The children from class 3 will go to class 4 and in this way the school will be enlarged again.

Another reason for building our own school is that we then have more guarantee to be able to stay where we are (this guarantee we do not have right now since we are renting the present local house).

But before we can actually start to build there is a lot of paperwork to be done and that takes time. But it is very, very exciting (to say the least) to build our own school according to our own ideas and wishes. We have been brainstorming about having a separate hostel for boys and girls, enough classrooms, a sort of multipurpose room for yoga, meditation, theatre etc, also a bigger kitchen and dining room, office and prayer room. Outside will we have enough space for playgrounds and a vegetable and flower garden.

The last couple of weeks Jamyang and me were busy selecting the new children for nursery for the new school year which will start 21st February 2005. This is a very happy and a very confronting/ sad thing to do at the same time. And you start to see that there are many different levels of poverty. Lots of parents came to ask admission for their child and we went to visit many families to get an impression of their family and living conditions. Because our priority is the children of most needy families we wanted to take a well founded decision and unfortunately there are always more people eager to have their child in our school than seats available.

The living conditions of many families was very, very basic..... for example a family with two children living in a little bamboo shed which is hardly more than a sort of cow shed. A Sherpa woman from a little remote village came to visit us. She is mother of 7 children and lives in a small hut without electricity in the middle of the forest high in the mountains. Her husband is sick and she has to sell her only cow to cover his expenses. She asks whether one of her children could stay in our hostel.

Some Saturday morning two men came to see us, one walking on gum boots and the other one on slippers. They were quietly sitting on the wooden bench under the tree and told their story. After our conversation about their family situation and living circumstances (little bamboo house high in the mountains) they were getting up to hit the road. It turned out that they had a 5 hour long climb ahead of them to get back to their village in the mountains!! All together, coming down and walking up again it took them more than 8 hours walking....only to submit admissions for their respective children.... We met families of various different backgrounds....big families without any income, families of which either the father or the mother died, extreme poverty, sickness etc. All cases were different and most cases being sincere ones, made it difficult to take a decision. After a lot of questioning and thinking were

we able to select 10 new children and it is absolutely fantastic to make people happy by saying that their child is admitted. But at the same time is it extremely painful to disappoint people when we can not place their child because some other family is even more needy.

All and all did we select five children from our local village Bhuriakhop who will be day scholars next year. Three girls named: Praticika Gurung, Regina Gurung and Sapna Gurung and two boys: Aita Raj Subba and Jeewan Gurung.

For our hostel we will also have five new children: Bei Chung Sherpa, a boy from triplets whose father died in a bus accident last year. Dup Tsering is a boy of the family of seven (mentioned above). Two boys are the children of the two men that came walking up and down for 8 hours (as mentioned earlier) and one girl: Beenita Gurung whose mother died while giving birth to another child recently. The father did not even have money for a very simple cremation in the forest.....Each and every single child comes from a family that really can do with this kind of support and help from our side.

It is really fantastic that all of us together: you "there" and we "here" can make this happen!!

On the 25th December 2004 it will exactly be two years ago that we arrived in Bhuriakhop in a small truck with some tools and things. We started from scratch....building, sawing, painting, organizing and planning.

I can hardly believe what we have managed to develop in just two years time. We had 40 children in our first school year, 52 in our second school year and another 10 new children in 2005! We build extra classrooms last year, and some new showers (cold) recruited new local teachers, established a flower and vegetable garden, organized more teaching material and lots more...

Something that still touches me most is the pure, uncomplicated and enthusiastic nature of the children.....their openness and incredible eagerness to learn.

Because we were able to offer many different kinds of activities and skills next to regular classes they are developing many 'hidden' qualities which they probably never would have developed if they still had been living in their original villages with limited means. In this way they are developing themselves in a very diverse and balanced way.

It is difficult to express how much genuine satisfaction it gives me to be part of this all!!

If anyone wants to support us in any way....for our building project or by sponsoring an individual child.....know that any contribution is greatly appreciated by al children, staff and helpers!

You can sponsor a child for a minimum of 20 euro per month. Any single donation will be used towards our building project.

Donations can be sent into the bank account of our Trust in the Netherlands named:

Kinderen van Sikkim (Children of Sikkim)

Send it on the name of : Jannie Langbroek (one of the trustees)

Kromme Waal 20

1011 BT Amsterdam

Banknr : Postbank 9227356

Foreigners also need to mention: toelichting ING.BNL. 2A

FOREIGN OPERATIONS

Postbank 1800

1000 BV Amsterdam

In the UK you can pay money into a bank account called  
Friends of Sikkim Himalayan Academy  
Account number 59011963  
Branch sort code 60-02-05  
National Westminster Bank Plc  
Bath, Stuckeys

For £150 per year you could sponsor a child but even small amounts make life better for the school.

Have you ever visited one of our websites to see those beautiful faces and to get an impression:

[www.sikkimhimalayanacademy.org](http://www.sikkimhimalayanacademy.org)

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In the meantime it is December and all the children are with their families and the school is closed. I have made my home for a couple of months in Bodhgaya a very holy place where the Buddha attained enlightenment some 2500 years ago. I am staying in a buddhist centre where I lead daily meditations and help out with other activities during introduction to Buddhism courses. It is all very inspiring!!!

I will be back in Sikkim in March!

Thanks a lot for all your help, support and interest!

Love and blessings

Hedwig