

Newsletter May 2019

Visit to Sikkim by Mieke and Jannie, October 2018

1. Introduction

In October 2018, Mieke and Jannie from our colleagues in the Dutch Trust Kinderen van Sikkim visited West Bengal and Sikkim via Delhi to meet with past and present beneficiaries of funding for their education in school or college/university. This newsletter is a translation of the post on the Dutch site:

<https://www.sikkim.nl/home/Nieuwsbrief-2018.pdf>

2. NEWSLETTER CHILDREN OF SIKKIM 2018 MIEKE AND JANNIE

Contrary to our previous visit where we visited most students in their place of study like Delhi, Bangalore and Calcutta, we this year had planned a reunion in Kalimpong near Dr Grahams. Also because we thought it might be nice and good if everybody we support could meet, the students at Dr Grahams and all the others from the rest of India.



3. DELHI

Our start is Delhi where we meet Samjyor and Kursongkit. Samjyor will do his Master's at the Law Faculty of Delhi University in 2019 and Kursongkit is doing her Master's in developmental psychology, a new study at Ambedkar University: "Early Childhood Care and Education".

We are joined during the first part of our trip by Monique and Robert, friends of Mieke and sponsors of Sikkim from the start. As usual we arrive in the middle of the night and have our first appointment, with Samjyor, the following morning. He takes us to his Faculty where he has to leave us for a while as he has to work at the 'legal aid office'. After that we visit his room. Two years ago when we visited his room we were shocked and Samjyor in tears but this one is fine. He shares an apartment with 3 other boys and also a kitchen. Later on Kursongkit joins us and in the evening we have dinner together with Anand, a friend of ours who on different occasions helped us out and has a big and useful network. Next day we also visit Kursongkit's room: rented out by a very nice couple who themselves have two daughters who study abroad. They now take care of a group of young ladies to fill up their 'empty nest'. Kursong too has a very nice room but tells us there will be a cheaper one available in a few months time but after seeing this we decide to let her stay in her present one. (13,000 rps per month, 150 euro, all meals included).



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4. KALIMPONG – DR GRAHAMS

Monday morning we leave by plane for Bagdogra, two hours from Delhi. Samjyor has taken one week off and joins us. Unfortunately Kursongkit could not, due to study commitments. In Bagdogra we have to find a car to take us to Kalimpong and we happily leave the hassle of finding one to Samjyor. Once inside a car we stop 500 metres further to wait for the real car to come, a friend of the initial driver. Four hours later we arrive at Deki Lodge, a small hotel where we have stayed several times before and where now we have reserved so many rooms that the owner anxiously asks whether we really want that many? Yes.

Furthermore we tell him about the lunch we have in mind for 30 persons, the next day. After the first shock he starts to smile and that's arranged. After a while the students start to arrive, and we welcome them warmly.



The next day Sangdup, our liaison in Sikkim who has also arrived the night before, fetches the children from Dr Grahams, together with some of the older students. In the kitchen meanwhile there is a lot of noise. Jannie has brought a lot of photos of the children from her own collection, some dating from 15 years ago and the children are elated to see them. Memories of their past lives. There are also two calendars of the last years that are eagerly scrutinized and ultimately raffled. After lunch Mieke and Jannie interview all the children about how they feel, whether happy at school and their favourite subjects and pastimes. There is an overview of these talks at the end. Meanwhile it's funny to see all the interaction between the children: Nimphuti informs Mikzim



about her nurse training in Bangalore and Rha takes care of Sonam Palden who seems very shy. Later we hear that he was ill and transported to the hospital. Monique and Robert also join in with good advice and talk about their jobs. Monique tells about her study and way of living independently. For the girls an eye-opener. Laymit and Nimphuti are determined not to marry in order not to waste their time by cooking for a man. When afterwards we ask them what was important to them when at SHA and what they thought of all these volunteers coming from all parts of the world, we are pleasantly surprised to hear that they thought it fantastic and also the fact that we stimulated them to think for themselves instead of taking things for granted. After dinner we have more talks about their study and plans for the future.

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The day after we visit Dr Grahams where now 16 of our children are educated, an English style boarding school originating in 1900 and with a rich tradition, also in giving opportunities to children from a poor background. For a moment it looks like our visit is totally unexpected but then the class teachers of the different children appear. Again we are amazed how well they know our children and how concerned they are. Not everything is positive but in general they are satisfied. It's nice to hear that the children seem to feel at home at the school – a sense of belonging - and are active in all kinds of sport and activities. We also speak with Nichola Pereira, the newly appointed head of the Sponsor Office. She herself studied at Dr Grahams and has a Master's in Social Work. She too knows in detail about the children, if they are doing well, behave and are happy.

THE FOLLOWING STUDENTS WILL BE GOING TO SAS TO PLAY THE FINAL OF SIKKIM'S CUP 2018 ON 5TH OCTOBER 2018 AT 12:00 NOON

1	MIKMA TAMANG	8C	D/S
2	SHREEPAL TAMANG	8 B	D/S
3	SOLMON A. RINON	7A	GT
4	SOMAM PALDEN	6A	AS
5	GURMEE D. LEPOHA	6B	AS
6	ALEX KANGDING	7B	WT
7	BIGDEN BHUTIA	6A	WT
8	ALEX RAN	6B	D/S
9	BIKASH TAMANG	6A	D/S
10	KARAN GHATAHEY	6B	D/S
11	SIFEN GHATAHEY	6A	D/S
12	TANCHOKE SUBBA	6B	D/S
13	ASHWIN BASALY	4C	D/S
14	KARU TAMPA	4 C	D/S
15	RAGHAV PRASANN	8C	D/S
16	KARMA SHUKLA	8C	D/S
17	OMI KUMAR SHAH	7C	HD
18	HARSHIT KIRAT	7C	WT
19	HARSHIT KIRAT	7 C	WT
20	ANURAG RAI	6A	AS

PLEASE REPORT TO SUBJUNIOR BY 3RD OCTOBER 2018.



Because officially there is no such thing as career counselling, she took it upon herself to organise once or twice a year a Career Fair, especially for the children of class 11 and 12. From class 9 on, she is busy organising Life Skills Training which also covers sex education. Further, nearly all our wishes concerning clothing and toiletries have been fulfilled. The only thing that is lacking now is sports clothing, especially shoes. As sponsors we are responsible for the festive clothing for the May Ball and we are quite prepared to take care of that but Nichola loves to help with the shopping. She suggests some measures regarding the older girls who sometimes cause problems, by separating them and putting them in different cottages. We agree.

Last but not least we speak with the Headmaster. Mr Neil Montero, whom we spoke to also 2 years ago. He is pleased to have a new management team that nearly completely consists of OBG's – Old Boys and Girls from the school. Some problems we earlier discussed have been solved but for example not the opening of the library – where the computers are – outside school hours. He promises to look into it. He would have liked to be more active in some fields, but the school suffered a lot from the Ghurka problems which kept the school closed for several months. Most children could not even reach the school. He also asks our support to send more sponsored children as he thinks it very important to have children from different backgrounds in the school – it was one of the main purposes in the school's foundation. We promised to do our best.



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5. TRAVELLING THROUGH SIKKIM



Next day we say goodbye to all students and travel north with Samjyor and Monique and Robert. In Gangtok we meet next to our hotel by accident Rinchen who used to be the guardian of the boys hostel and now is financial manager of one of the hippest places in town: youngsters dressed in latest fashion, a band and fancy drinks. A happy reunion. The days after we travel around to the places of the past, a sentimental journey in a way: DPCA where it all started and where unfortunately not much seems to have changed. The small building that Hedwig made possible as a



kind of sickbay now is taken over by teachers as their lodging. In Gangtok we also meet again with Nedup and Laymit who study there and when we meet for dinner we also meet Pumjay who left SHA to become a nun. She now tells that after 5 years she realised the monastery was not her ultimate dream and went back to school. She now works as a bartender in the casino of The Mayfair, the poshest hotel in Sikkim. We enjoy her company and reminisce about the past. Robert and Monique and Samjyor by then have left.

6. DZONGU

Later that week we leave for Dzongu, the most northern part of Sikkim where we will stay in Sangdup's Homestay in Lingthem. On the way up we meet Enjay in Mangan. She did her Masters in horticulture and now is employed by the government. Her work consists of convincing farmers to take up bio culture and the preservation of nature. She has invited us for lunch in the room where she stays during the week. At weekends she returns to her mother in Dzongu. Sangdup's Homestay is surprisingly nice and in a way luxurious as it has washing rooms with hot water and western toilets. Nature around is stunning with Kanchenjunga in view.



<https://www.homestay.com/india/lingthem/139318-homestay-in-lingthem-lingthem>

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7. NOTES ON CONVERSATIONS ¹

Students:

Samjyor (M) (24) graduates in the year (Master's) at the University of Delhi (Campus Law Centre, Faculty of Law). Wants to become a lawyer.

Kursongkit (F)(24), Master's 1st year, Ambedkar University (Delhi), developmental psychology, Early Childhood Care and Education



Rha Tshering (M) (on photo with father) (24), Bachelor 3rd year, St Xavier (Calcutta), Commerce. Then consider doing a Master's, possibly marketing.

Laymit (F) (23), bachelor degree obtained in Namchi (Sikkim), now first year Master's in Gangtok (University of Sikkim), Mass communication. Would like to become a journalist.

Nimphuti (F) (23), has completed 2-year training general nursing (kind of HBO), now first year Bachelor nursing, Bangalore.

Kinzangkit (F) (23), Bachelor 2nd year, St Xavier (Calcutta), political science (ancillary subjects history and sociology). Wants to become a teacher.

Nedup (M) (24), bachelor 3rd year, Sikkim Government College Tadong (Sikkim), sociology.

Dichhen (M) (22), Bachelor 2nd year, Government College Namchi (Sikkim)

Dr. Grahams Homes:

Rekchen (M) (18), class 11, Arts Stream, favourite subject: Political Science. Doing athletics and swimming (prizes won with relay).

Miksim (F) (16), Class 11, arts stream, only since April 2018 at DGH (comes from Dzongu), Favourite subject: History, spelt volleyball, wants to be a nurse.

Kareena (F) (17), Class 10, Commerce Stream, favourite subject: Commerce.

Pemdiki (F) (15), Class 9, arts stream, favourite subjects: English and economics. Plays volleyball.

Dawkit (F) (16), Class 9, arts stream, plays basketball.

Lakhi (F) (15), Class 8, wanted to do commerce stream, but is very good at mathematics and that's also her favourite subject (we recommend science Stream). Very good at school, plays football.

Sushmita (F) (16), Class 8, Favourite subject: Mathematics. Is ranked 3rd in her class. Wants to do science or commerce stream. Plays basketball in the school team.

Phurba (M) (14), Class 7, favourite subjects: Mathematics and Science (and is good at it). Plays football.

Nitesh (M) (14), Class 7, favourite subject: Physics. Plays football.

Tam Yang (M) (14), Class 7, favourite subjects: Physics and Nepali. Doesn't find math so much fun, but is good at it.

¹ Key: (M) – male; (F) – female; (18) - age

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Sanjay (M) (14), Class 7. Finds all the subjects fun, but favourite subject is geography and that is also his best result. Plays football and basketball in the school team.

Anurag (M) (13), Class 6. Favourite subject: Math. Does not like Nepali, reading and writing. Plays football in the school team.

Sonam Palden (M) (13), Class 6. Favourite subject: English. Does not like Nepali. He is doing swimming, football and basketball.

Guymee (M), Class 6. We could not speak because he was in bed with a virus infection in the school hospital.

Other old SHA children we talked to:

Topden (M) (19), Class 12 (Final Exam) Gangtok Government School. Wants to become a doctor and if that fails, pharmacist.

Chung Chung (F), class 11 Tribal School, Science stream. Wants to become a doctor. Thinks that she wants to do the entrance exam (NEET exam) immediately.

Karma (M), Class 7 Tribal School. He likes his school.

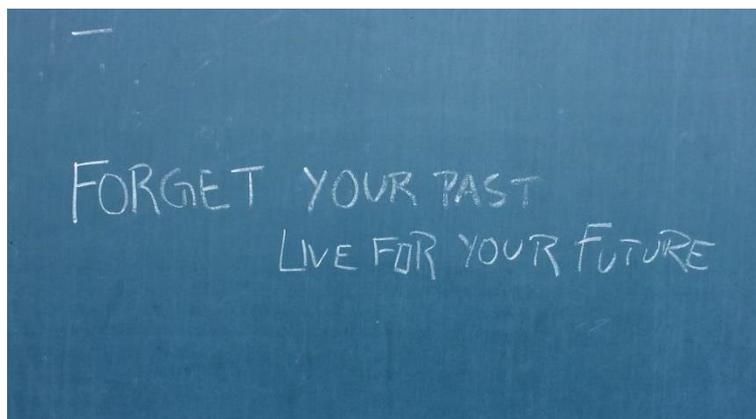
Sunamit (F), Class 9 Government School near Tashiding, very unfortunate there. We'll see if she can go to Dr. Grahams (class 11 and 12, like Miksim).

Not seen or spoken, supported by the foundation:

Hisey (F) studies Political Science, Economics and Journalism at Mount Carmel College in Bangalore, Bachelor 2nd year.

Tshering Dorjee (M), does a year ' for training ' to be able to do admission examination (NEET Exam) for study medicines (Alan career Institute).

Sarda (F), studying nursing (Bachelor, 3rd year) in Bangalore.



8. LODEN IN GANGTOK AND CHILDREN ONCE SPONSORED IN DZONGU

From Dzongu we made another stopover in Gangtok, where we met Loden Lepcha, the director of Mayel Lyang Academy (in Dzongu), the school that now no longer exists, but where we used to sponsor twenty children. Loden is accompanied by two former pupils, Laden and Dawa. Both are in

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the second year of their Bachelor and live with Loden. Dawa studies Lepcha and wants to become a teacher, Laden does sociology.

We get an update from all the kids who were once sponsored:

Sonam still attends training as a chef in Mysore, south-India.

Timsong lives with a sister in Gangtok, sits in class 12 of Dairali Girls School and does a final exam next year.

Ponalmit, 2nd Year college in Gangtok, government school.

Sosongmit, 2nd year Burtuk College, science.

Pema, 2nd year college in Gangtok

DupTshering, Arts College, Mangshila

Lakhden, Arts College Burtuk.

Phurba, Class 10 government school in Passingdang (Dzongu). Lives in the old school. Has one sister who pays for his maintenance.

Leah, Class 8, sister of Dawa, government School in Lingthem (Dzongu).

Dawmit, Class 10 government school in Passingdang.

Ringzum, government School in Passindang, lives with a niece.

Nomit and Chumit have disappeared from the picture, no contact.

Loden currently has no money, Dawa and Laden work in a restaurant that Loden has started. He knows that he can always appeal to us.



Dawa



Loden



Laden

From Gangtok we travel via Bagdogra back to Delhi where we meet for the last time with Anand, Kursongkit and Samjyor.

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