

Sertshang Orphanage Home

Newsletter september 2014



«I count on you!»

Who is next for a ride on the bicycle? In front of the orphanage, the kids stand in line, waiting for Daksya to return from his round. The 14year old and his friend Sagar were quick to learn how to pedal and balance on the bike. They practiced a lot in the quarter's narrow lanes.

Their skills now allow them to even take little passengers along for a ride on the baggage porter. Although their short legs do not yet reach down to the pedals, they are eager to sit on the saddle, grab the steering bar and be pushed along by the older kids, just like they once taught each other to ride a bike.

At the Sertshang orphanage, learning who to ride a bike works pretty much like doing homework for school, cooking, sewing, knitting or playing football. As soon as on child has mastered a task, it teaches the other ones.

There was a lot of excitement when Choegyal Rinpoche suddenly showed up with two Indian bicycles. One more surprise to the children, another experience, literally speaking quite a moving one. Challenges have summed up since the return of Choegyal Rinpoche to Kathmandu and has resumed to take responsibility for the orpha-

nage. The son of the orphanage's founder Tashi Sertshang had gone on a three year retreat in the Himalayas after his education.

Being a meditation teacher with a busy schedule, the 31 year old still spends much time with the children while being in Nepal. He has known them in many years. He emphasizes the importance of the children making many experiences and the little world of the orphanage to open up. Bike tours in the quarter do not suffice. Lectures, films, discussions, and excursions sharpen the awareness of the youngsters to a future in one of the world's poorest countries and it's many problems.

The political situation in the little Himalayan state is still in quite a deadlock. The young republic of Nepal still has no constitution, the political parties are in a constant clash and the government can hardly take any action. Like in other Asian countries, within this political vacuum, massive economical changes take place. Neighboring countries investing in Nepal only focus on their own advantage. Only a small fraction of society profits from these activities, some of which are quite intransparent. The vast majority of the population has to battle inflation, soaring prices for food and corruption.

“However big the problems are, we must not capitulate” Choegyal Rinpoche tells the children: “Unless we make a change ourselves, nothing will change”. With little projects, he points out, how everyone can contribute to this purpose. And he starts right outside the orphanage’s gates where

Professional life – initial experiences

While many orphanages in Nepal leave the children to themselves after completing the obligatory school years, Choegyal Rinpoche discusses with the children, how they can contribute to setting up projects when having completed their educa-



rubbish keeps piling up. Nepal’s waste management system is still insufficient. Household garbage must be taken to the rubbish dump on private initiative. There are no public trash cans or garbage collection sites. During school holidays, Choegyal Rinpoche took action: together with the children, they cleaned the quarter’s public lawns. Although after some time, the lawns need cleaning again, the intervals needed for cleaning become longer. A sign of inhabitants reconsidering their habits. “There is so much, one can do” smiles 11 year old Molika proudly after having filled another bag with garbage. She lists up what she wants to do when she grows up. Garbage tours are not the only activities in the quarter. The children also regularly visit a poor home for the elderly, washing peoples hair and clothes.

tion. “I count on you”, he keeps telling even the youngest of the children.

One of the first to have mastered entering the professional world was Pasang, who found school very tiring and was eager to work. Now, he is trained as a cook in a little restaurant. As much as he disliked going to school, he now enjoys riding the bike to his rather strict work. He does such a good job that Choegyal Rinpoche considers him for a responsible position: He would like to establish a home for disabled people. So far, there are only few such institutions in Kathmandu and he would like Pasang to do the cooking there.

College students Nyidup, Naresh and Rohan have gathered initial job experiences. Over the past three months, they have been working part time for a packaging company.

With the money they earned, they bought bikes, on which they ride to work in the freshly ironed shirts.

Their schedule at the college of economy, they attend, allows them enough time to earn money as most students depend on a job. All further education after primary

much to these results, using his scarce free time, helping the others to prepare for their exam, as if it was a matter of course. In his calm, thoughtful way, he has a talent of explaining even the most complex details.

He has completed the second college year, once again ranking among the best.



schools needs to be paid for and many parents cannot afford the school money requested by the college. Finding a job, part or fulltime, is difficult in a country with an unemployment rate above 40%. Without a network, finding a job is close to hopeless – which makes it even more difficult for orphans to make a career. Having the three of them in work and pay was only possible due to Choegyul Rinpoche's vast network of personal connections.

Visiting the home village

Starting into job life is a perspective for a number of teenagers in the orphanage. 17 of them already have a school leaving certificate (SLC) and attend college. Once again, good marks were achieved by the 10th class graduates. Kunkep contributed

Like Tsering Cheodon, he will start studying medicine.

Among the various educations, those in trade, technical, agriculture and social professions are most popular. With many of the teenagers, their choice of education has been coined by their recent experience of visiting their home villages. In the free months between school exam and the commencing college studies, they visited their home villages for the first time after leaving them many years ago. Not all the children in the orphanage and fully orphaned. After more than ten years, Dickyl met her mother, who could not take care of all of her children then. It was not an easy meeting. "Two women came to me and I did not know, which of them was my mother" the 17-year old said: "In the beginning, there were no

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Brigitta Niederhauser

Association Sertshang Orphanage Home

The association supports the orphanage in Kathmandu, founded by tibetan medic Tashi Sertshang, All donation money goes directly to the orphanage, as all administrative costs are covered by the board of directors. The tax-exempted association is based in Bern, donations to the German and Austrian Associations' accounts can also be deducted from taxes.

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feelings at all". Communication was difficult, not only because Dicky hardly speaks the Tibetan dialect anymore. After her stay in the mountains, Dyckil later on wants to contribute to enhancing life conditions in her home village. She scored excellent results in her exam and looks forward to studying biology.

Eight year old Monoj keeps talking about building a proper house in his home village. He came to the orphanage two years ago. He has not forgotten the hardships, hunger and hard labour. But he has learned a lot since. From Pempa, he learned how to play cards, Njudrup taught him how to ride a bike, from Lhapka Choekyi, he adopted how to take regard to others, Rohan trained him in playing soccer and Kunkep and Choegyal Rinpoche gave him the confidence of having the option to learn a profession adaequate to his abilities.

Personal Sponsorships

Despite the rise in cost of living, sponsorship rates of 40 Francs (30 Euros) will not be raised in 2014, so as to have a large group of personal donors participating. A part of the rise in costs can be covered by the favourable exchange rate of the Swiss Franc.

School money, purchases, maintenance and expansion of the orphanage need coverage by additional donations and sponsors.

Single Donations

A single donation can bring much joy. A football of proper quality costs 18 Francs (15 Euro), a skipping rope is available for 2,50 Francs (2 Euro). 25 Francs (20 Euros) can enlargen the library and 200 Francs can cover the cost for a trip to take all the children to the countryside for a larger excursion.

