

Newsletter no 2, 2011

Kathmandu April 3, 2011

Tashi Delek and Namaste!

I am temporarily visiting Nepal and have once more met Chembal Lama, KMCH's founder in Nepal. There was not enough time to visit the far-away region of Humla but Chembal Lama told me about the latest events and developments in the mountainous region.

News From Humla

Village School in Yalwang

The winter in Humla has been long, cold and with plenty of snowfall. The school was planned to start in the beginning of March but due to the amount of snow it was delayed until the end of March. Last week the teachers and students have once more gathered to commence the new school year. In the school there are now more than 150 students. 24 of them stay in KMCH's children home during the terms. Chembal Lama told me, not without some pride, that the KMCH children are doing very well and that the top students of the school are from KMCH. The local education authority of Humla has recently decided that the school will be expanded up til class 10 (today it teaches up til class 8).



The children are well and healthy and both Chukhel and Lhaki are still living with the children in the children home. Chukhel is also one of the teachers in the local village school. Paljor, a young man who previously stayed with the children when they lived in Kathmandu Valley and who is a board member of the Nepalese KMCH is now working at the college in Simikot, the regions largest city. He has recently married and we all wish him a lot of happiness and success in the new career.

Nakhi, the young woman who also lived in the children home when it was situated in Kathmandu Valled and who helped with everything from cooking to assisting with home

work and being a role model for the young girls has recently found a job and moved back to Humla. We also congratulate her to her new position.

The administrative head of the children home in Humla is now Lhakpa Norbu. Over a year ago his wife gave birth to a young boy. Unfortunately he did not live for more than a few months. Recently his wife gave birth again, to two twin girls. There is some fear that she does not have enough milk for them both. We send our best wishes to Lhakpa Norbu and his wife and hope the girls will live to be healthy and strong.

As we previously in newsletters has stated, KMCH wants to build a larger children home which can house more children than today. The village council of Yangar has donated KMCH some land for the purpose and last year water pipes were laid down from a nearby river. But so far there is not enough money to commence building. Some parents and family members of Chembal Lama have nevertheless started to collect stone to be used as building materials. Chembal lama estimates that the cost to build one room would be around 8 000 SEK. Five rooms would make a sufficient start.

Road Construction in Humla

In previous newsletters from KMCH we have often described Humla as a unique region in Nepal where there are no roads and no cars or motorbikes etc. A mountainous landscape where the Himalayas since old has been treaded on by the feet of men and animals in caravans. But this is about to change. For a number a year one there has been a subsidised road construction finances with international aid going on in Humla, attaching the region to Tibet, China. Many voices I have heard have been sceptical whether it is possible or not and whether it is not only a way to provide the local workers with a low salary and rice. Chembal said that the first ever cars have now reached Yari, in Upper Humla. It is still a long way to go before a road is completed all the way to Yangar and Yalwang but when that happens it will irrevocably begin to change the lifestyle in Humla.

Food prices in Humla are still on the increase this difficult winter. One kilo of sugar costs 60 rupees in Kathmandu, however in Humla, the cost is 250 rupees. Local villagers hope that a road and modern modes of transport will lower the prices but it will also be the end of the caravans that for hundreds of years have walked these tiny roads to Tibet for trading and selling expeditions.

Handicraft and Adult Teaching

During my visit in Kathmandu, Chembal Lama was visited by a man from Humla who came to Kathmandu to seek medical assistance for heart problems. Chembal Lama



helped him to hospital, to negotiate the price, and to translate for him. The man brought with him some of the textiles local women in Humla had weaved as a part of KMCH handicraft project. The pieces of textiles will now be turned into bags and table cloths. For those of you who, since Chembal's visit to Sweden last year, have been waiting for the bags, I need to ask for a little more patience.

Chembal also nourishes a wish to be able to sell some local handicraft in Humla. During the warm seasons there are some trekkers who walk on the way to and from Mount Kailash in Tibet through Humla. They might be interested in buying unique local products on the last piece of the road, especially since most of them come with animals or men who help them carry the loads.

Adult teaching is still going on in the villages of Tumkot and Yangar. Just as before, it is still mostly young women who participate. Some are now able to read simple books and brochures and they can write their names and simple letters to their children and family.

Namkhyung Charity Clinic

Jamyang, the young monk who has been the head of the charity clinic has recently left his position to return to his previous position in another charity clinic. Rinpoche, abbot at the monastery in Yalwang, has found a good replacement. A trained male nurse has already taken up the position in Humla. He is a local from southern Humla, thus, he does not speak the Tibetan dialect but knows Nepali and has good medical experience. Even though we have a very limited budget for the total cost for the clinic, 24 000 SEK per year, there seems to be enough medicine and equipment for the need. Chembal told me of a young woman in his village who, during child birth, lost a lot of blood. Even though Jamyang had been away from the clinic at that time the other monks that he had trained could provide her with glucose from the clinic. The young mother has now fully recovered.

Green House and Eco-toilets

In previous newsletter KMCH has informed about the green house that last year was built in Humla, financed by contributions from Switzerland. The green house is owned, and used, by the children home in Yangar. The children and staff has successfully during this winter grown tomatoes, cauliflower and carrots and despite the harsh weather it has been warm enough for winter harvest. Our hope is that it will serve as a model and inspire others to use the same method. Already the monastery in Yalwang has built a similar green-house with good harvest this winter. Fresh vegetables wintertime is a good contribution of vitamins in the otherwise very limited nutritious value of the dried staple food used. A green house costs less than 4 000 SEK to build, including labour and material.



Lhakpa Norbu, one of Chembal' older brothers and administrative head of the KMCH children home are now trained by another NGO how to build eco-toilets which separates urine and stool so it can be used as natural fertilizer. The construction of eco-toilets are right now going on in Humla, one will be built close to the green house.

That was the latest news from Humla!

Warm regards

Pernilla Smith, in Nepal on behalf of the Board of the KMCH Support Group

Photo: Chembal Lama

Photos

- 1.and 5. KMCH children perform at Parents Day in village school in Yalwang.
2. Women participating in KMCHs handicraft project,
3. Chembal's mother prepares the cotton thread before weaving
4. Stone is collected for a future building of a larger KMCH children home.

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