



Rinchen Zangpo Society For Spiti Development

Educational Newsletter No. 20

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In Kaza, a Whole New School



Building a new school in Kaza... A vision of the school we hope to have soon

Kaza Primary School

Kaza Primary School is a very successful part of the Rinchen Zangpo Society for Spiti Development's Education Programme. Our first branch school in Spiti, it is very popular with the parents of Kaza, the Spiti headquarters, and in expanding to meet the demand for places for their children, we have now, after six years of progress, completely outgrown our present rented building. 78 boys and 88 girls are studying there this year with the help of 14 staff. We have begun laying the foundations of a completely new school building on a very pleasant and spacious riverside site.



Construction has begun and the foundation has been laid



Cramped conditions in our rental facility while our new school takes shape in the background

Kaza Primary School (Cont'd)

This land has been granted to us free by the local government, who are thus as supportive of our efforts as possible. Now we appeal for construction funds to build our own primary school premises (non-boarding) there. Expanding our Kaza operation in this way will take the pressure off our main school, Munsel-ling (552 students, 382 boarding), in nearby Rangrik, so that it can provide

many more places for children from

the large number of poorer families in outlying villages who need greater financial support and hostel places. Thanks to your subsidies, a people who might otherwise remain trapped at a backward stage of development with their culture under threat are getting an appropriate education for some children at least. It is time to expand that number. Please give generously and help bring this school into being!



A CAD rendering of the future school in Kaza

Chlorinated Water Project

Every summer since 2000, medical students from the University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada, have been visiting Munsel-ling School. One supposes people living at high altitude need more red blood cells rather than less but one health problem identified amongst the children has been anaemia. Diarrhoea was identified as a major cause of it and drinking untreated water and unwashed hands as root causes of that. After building a concrete storage

chamber and mains pipe for the school's

surface water supply, a UBC graduate engineering student team piloted batch chlorination of water and drinking cum hand washing stations on the school campus in 2012. This year treated water capacity was increased so that the number of water stations, of improved and more durable construction, could be expanded to four to provide easy access from all parts of the campus. Medical students meanwhile taught the importance of hygiene and personal cleanliness while providing iron supplements.



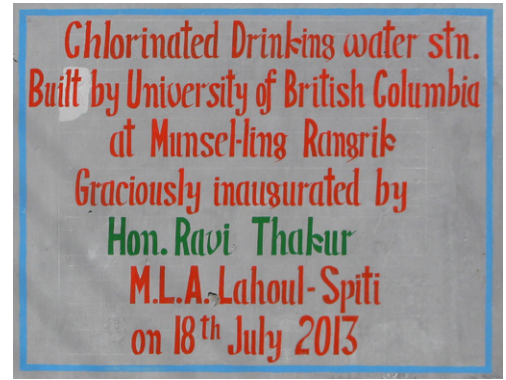
The high-tech chlorination station now on-site at Munsel-ling



Namrata Gupta from UBC speaks with Hon. Ravi Thakur and General Secretary Tashi Namgyal during the ribbon cutting ceremony

Chlorinated Water Project (Cont'd)

Planning and application over a number of years has borne fruit in improving the health and sanitation of the Munsel-ling community. (But what happened to the soap on a rope at the washing stations? wonders one who has 'borne the symptoms' in homes with no running water in high desert places.) UBC students will be back to monitor the impacts of clean water on the health of the school population and with further proposals. The water system set up so far only works in temperate weather. The system is now drained until spring. Also, cold water in winter is not advisable for children's stomachs.



Making good use of clean water

Water drawn from underground has to be heated for drinking at this time. This year's UBC graduate engineering students were Morgan Deschuymer, Jordan Chung and Namrata Gupta, the medical students Leah Ellingwood, George Ko, Tyler Wilson and Kate Gapp. Financial support and technical guidance were provided by Hatch Mott McDonald of Vancouver, deft plumbing and tiling expertise by summer migrant workers from the state of Bihar and finally, in July, recently elected local member of the Himachal Pradesh State Legislative Assembly, Mr Ravi Thakur, performed the opening ceremony.

Julie Clemence Memorial Junior Girls Hostel

On Munsel-ling School campus a new home for up to fifty junior girls has opened. The population of Spiti is very scattered so children must board at the school at the school from a very young age. The youngest are housed separately. Senior girls have their own hostel. Now it is the turn of the junior girls. Twenty-five moved in on the ground floor of the new building in late August. For insulation and durability the wall is concrete block on the outside and of local mud construction on the inside. These thick mud walls take some time to dry out thoroughly



so the potentially colder upper dormitory has been left vacant for the time being, over the winter. Each floor has one large dormitory, where the sister-in-charge also sleeps, plus a store room, a bathroom with a clear plastic, sloping roof for solar enhanced bathing and a south facing study room with lots of glass, in the day time usually warm even in winter thanks to Spiti's powerful sunlight.

A cozy dormitory room in the Julie Clemence Memorial Junior Girls Hostel, with its first batch of residents eager to test it out

Julie Clemence Memorial Junior Girls Hostel (Cont'd)

The warmth percolates through to the more insulated dormitory where it is retained in the evening when doors are closed, a low cost remedy for winter's freezing



Julie Clemence Memorial Junior Girls Hostel

temperatures at 3,600 metres altitude. The hostel is now complete with all fittings. The money for it was all raised by Aid for Himalayan Education of the UK, in memory of the late Julie Clemence, a very capable supporter of this and other educational projects.



Hey, Sunshine...! A heating source in great abundance in sunny Spiti Valley, now bringing light and warmth to the hostel's study room

Great Generosity

Mr Nick Grant of the UK has generously paid for all the equipment for a completely refurbished computer classroom at Munsel-ling School. We have bought twenty-five desk computers with associated equipment and furniture. His donation will also cover transportation, wiring and installation costs.

To house the computers we have built a new senior computer classroom on top of the science labs. Dr Klaus Ruoff of Germany has personally donated towards this and through his help we have received a further bequest that covers most of the construction costs. We are very grateful to the organization German Aid to Tibetans for their help and co-operation also. After the winter freeze the new room will be painted and finished off and the new equipment will be in use there after the winter holiday.

The Nantwich Buddhist Group have renewed their generosity to us with a grant to cover the cost of televisions for the children's recreational and educational use (3, for primary, junior and senior sections) and a contribution towards the new toilets needed in the hostel area.

Further thanks to the Trans-Himalayan Aid Society (TRAS) of Canada. As part of their focus on girls education they are offering a total of six scholarships for Spiti girls to attend college anywhere in India. Two will be



A view of Munsel-ling School, Rangrik Village, Upper Spiti Valley, and in the background (on right) is snowy white Shilla Peak, one of the tallest mountains in Himachal Pradesh at over 6000m

chosen each year for the next three years. This is a fantastic targeted boost for some girls from our secluded valley to complete a full length education with all the distant travel that requires in this large country. Grateful thanks to all who have given any other donations, large or small, regular or one-off during the past year!



A person ought to have *principals*... Past and present, Mrs Tsering Dekyi and our current principal, Mr Ratnakar Remali

People

Mrs Tsering Dekyi resigned as principal of Munsel-ling School after many years of dedicated service to the Rinchen Zangpo Society for which we are extremely grateful. We are very happy to welcome as the new principal Mr Ratnakar Remali who, although Indian, is a long way from his home in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. He taught in Manali for a number of years before crossing the mountain passes to join us as senior Mathematics teacher. His wife teaches in the science department at Munsel-ling.

Mr V C Pharka, the Tribal Commissioner for the Himachal Pradesh state government, paid us a welcome visit at Munsel-ling on his annual tour of inspection. We are glad that he declared himself pleased by what he saw. A significant portion of school running costs come from the central government tribal affairs department so a successful inspection is important.

Bob the Australian dentist paid us another working visit. Representatives from SPARKE an organization dedicated to removing all forms of violence and disharmony from schools came again this year. We are very grateful for these inputs.

We regret the passing of Mr Wangchuk Gyampo, Indian representative of Swedish charity Soir IM, first major sponsors of Munsel-ling school. He gave us tremendous help since the inception of our project.

Promising Students

Three girls from our education programme have this year gained admission to Marinda House, premier girl's college of Delhi University and therefore one of the further education institutions hardest to gain admission to in all India. Two girls will be taking Maths honours and one Chemistry honours. Punjab University in Chandigarh is also very prestigious. One boy has been accepted there to study for Physics honours. Another boy will study non-medical science at the highly rated new Indian Institute of Science Education and Research in Kolkata (Calcutta). We have another half a dozen hopefuls now taking coaching classes in Chandigarh, preparing for all kinds of university entrance examinations. We wish them all luck.



Mr V C Pharka (center), the Tribal Commissioner for Himachal Pradesh, visiting our school at Munsel-ling

Educational Developments

Branch pre-primary schools in some of the larger villages in upper Spiti have been running for a few years. Last winter we organized learning centres in several villages also. Here older students gave help to younger ones to keep them abreast of their studies through the long winter break when movement even from village to village can be very restricted due to the snow and cold and poor footwear. This gave a boost to some children's studies. Also the Rinchen Zangpo Society has now been in existence long enough so that some of our former students who went away to complete their further education are coming back to work in our schools and offices, which is very gratifying and helpful of course.



Students and teacher of our branch pre-primary school in Kibber



Another educational move which worked very well was to take the ninth and tenth classes, (age 14-16) out of Spiti to our Sidhbari hostel near Dharamsala for part of the winter period. We have a number of very good part-time teachers giving our students resident at the hostel after-hours coaching classes, as well as good classroom facilities on site. It was very beneficial for our Munsel-ling pupils to get strong extra coaching in a balmy climate during the long Munsel-ling winter holiday, not least for the tenth class who have to take their state board examinations in March. This year we will send the eighth, ninth and tenth classes down to Sidhbari. The road down to Shimla can be very dangerous in bad weather though, and is easily blocked by landslides, so caution is required.

RINCHEN ZANGPO SOCIETY FOR SPITI DEVELOPMENT

HEAD OFFICE:

Spiti Complex, Rakkar Rd, Sidhbari - 176057, Distt Kangra,
H.P., India

MUNSEL-LING SCHOOL:

VPO Rangrik - 172114, Distt. Lahaul-Spiti,
H.P., India

WEBSITE:

www.rinchenzangpo.org

EMAIL:

rinchenhp@hotmail.com

