



Rinchen Zangpo Society For Spiti Development

Educational Newsletter No. 30

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New Branch School in Chango, Upper Kinnaur



An apple a day keeps the doctor away! The students at our new school in Chango now receive a high-quality education, and might even themselves become the future physicians of their community

The New Nalanda Pre & Primary School is the latest addition to the Rinchen Zangpo Society for Spiti Development's educational programme. The new school is in the village of Chango, Upper Kinnaur, about four hours' drive down the valley from Munsel-ling School and Kaza. It is by the Spiti river, not so far from where our river joins the Sutlej south flowing into India from Mount Kailash in Tibet. Here grow the finest apples, as our students and the greater community regularly enjoy.



Fresh students getting off to a great start in a fresh school

New Branch School in Chango (continued)

Children even as young as five were being sent as boarders to far-away Munsel-ling for the sake of

a worthwhile education. In 2019 a local Chango committee started a small school with guidance from the Rinchen Zangpo Society. Then came covid for a couple of years. After that, parents from Chango and surrounding villages urged Tashi Namgyal, General Secretary, to incorporate the school completely into our Society, promising that land would be available on which to build school premises. The school became fully a part of the Rinchen Zangpo Society's education programme this year and is recognized officially by the Himachal Pradesh State government. At present there are 74 students, nine teachers, two caretakers and one cook. There are classes from kindergarten to the fifth class being taught in rented accommodation. ☺



Meditation and prayer are a part of each student's daily practice

Spiti Festival

The Spiti Festival takes place every August in Kaza, the sub-district capital of Lahaul-Spiti. It is the successor to the Ladarcha Fair, an annual agricultural exposition whose origins stretch back at least 100 years and possibly earlier. The original Ladarcha was attended by traders, shepherds and nomads from Kullu, Kinnaur, Ladakh and Tibet, and these earliest gatherings were hosted by the village

of Chicham on an alpine pastureland not far from there. After taking care of business in Ladarcha, the traders then moved onward to Kullu City and to Rampur where similar agricultural fairs were held. But in the 1960s, after the borders with Tibet were cordoned off by the Indian and Chinese armies, the Ladarcha Fair ceased in its original form, moved to Kaza and eventually became the Spiti Festival, the cultural celebration we have today.



Munsel-ling students performing at the Spiti Festival

In most years, students from our Rinchen Zangpo Society have participated in the Spiti Festival by performing traditional songs and dance in a show of devoted community pride. And this year was no different as our students certainly made their presence known with their earthy folk dances and lively songs. If you haven't yet, you should try to attend the colorful Spiti Festival which is scheduled to take place each year just before harvest time. ☺

Completed Projects



ON-GOING CONSTRUCTION

Several construction efforts underway at the time of our last newsletter have been successfully completed this year. Only recently has Munsel-ling School had the resources to take students all the way to the end of their secondary education. So now more senior hostel accommodation has been required. Out of the sixty students in the senior two classes, forty are girls, double the number of boys.

The new girls' hostel is finished and ready to house our students

SENIOR GIRLS HOSTEL, MUNSEL-LING

The new senior girls hostel, incorporating solar design features, is now occupied and in use. At the inauguration on 18th July, representing the sponsors, German Aid for Tibetans (GAT), were Dr Elen and Gerd Scheurer. Great gratitude to them. Other distinguished guests present were our local Member of the Legislative Assembly, Sri Ravi Thakur, and also the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Sri Rahul Jain, chief government official in Spiti.

Dr Elen and Gerd Scheurer of German Aid for Tibet were presented with gifts for their generous contributions



BASKETBALL COURT, MUNSEL-LING

Our new basketball court at Munsel-ling was officially opened and declared ready for play this spring by Saklang Dorje our Spitian Olympic athlete (member of the Indian archery team). Many thanks here to the Urmil Trust of Bombay.



The opening ceremony for our new basketball court at Munsel-ling

Completed Projects

IMPROVEMENTS AT REWA SCHOOL

At Rewa Primary School, nearby to Munsel-ling, two very useful improvements: The boundary wall is now complete, keeping the children secure, and, built entirely this year, the new solar bathroom keeping them clean. The water is solar heated and, also very important, the transparent roof gives a warm inside temperature on a sunny afternoon, a very welcome feature when bathing in high altitude Spiti.

The new wall now in place at Rewa Primary School



As with most of the infrastructure and running costs of Rewa School, financial support here came from Tibethilfe Niederösterreich (Austria) with a contribution also from Tibetfreunde Schweiz (Switzerland) for the boundary wall. We were able to give our thanks in person to representatives Mr Ingomar and Mrs Brigitte Illetschko from Austria, visiting this summer, accompanied by Lama Karma

Lhundup Rinpoche.

More old friends were as kind as ever in helping to improve our schools. TRAS of Canada provided new books for our library and a new wooden floor for our examination hall. The latter project was also assisted with another generous donation from Jerome Ardissonne of France.



Translucent panelling on the roof at Rewa Primary School keeps the inside warm when the outside is freezing


Completed Projects



A PROPER SPACE

Students can now take their major exams in a warmer space on a comfortable wooden floor.

EXPANDING THE LIBRARY

More books are being donated and more funds are becoming available for their purchase. 



Support Requested



MORE FLOORING

Also being fitted with wooden flooring are the rooms for our smart classrooms project. Patrick Woodhouse has made a generous contribution and from anywhere in the world you can contribute to an appeal for the rest of the money needed for four classrooms electronically equipped for the digital age. Please follow this link:

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/patrick-sutherland-1696460665045> 

Other Events



INDIA'S NATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE FORCE
Emergency preparedness is being taught to school age children, keeping them ready for any potential disasters.

SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS OLYMPIAD

Held this year at Lari in lower Spiti, our Munsel-ling school won the prize for the best senior secondary school and our students won five trophies.



SCIENCE EXHIBITION AT MUNSEL-LING

- S Sooper
- C Cool
- I Inventions
- E Encourage
- N New
- C Commercial
- E Enterprises

Learning by Doing: Local government officers attending and giving pep talks. །།

Student Achievements

Last year we started medical college entrance examination coaching for our senior secondary school graduates in Spiti itself. Much cheaper than supporting students at expensive coaching establishments in the big city of Chandigarh and the like. Four out of five students, all girls, cleared the examinations with good marks. Last year those marks would have got them college places conveniently within our home state of Himachal or in neighbouring Chandigarh.

However this year the competition was more intense and the bar set higher, so to our disappointment only one girl, Tenzin Lhadon finally got the admission she wanted, at Tanda Medical School near Dharamsala. Two others got admission a long way away in states in south India with a compulsory five-year period of service there after completing studies. The unlucky three are studying for the examination again this year and they are joined by nine new candidates, five boys and four girls.

Three outstanding teachers have given our students confidence to try their hardest at the most competitive of examinations. They are Mr. Sanjeevan from Jharkand for Physics, Mr. Nitesh Thakur from Mandi for Biology and Mr. Lobzang Namgial from Spiti itself for Chemistry. Another of our top students last year was Nawang Tashi who has now commenced studying at the Mumbai India Institute of Technology, arguably the most highly rated of Indian science colleges. ◉



Tenzin Lhadon at Tanda Medical School, Dharamsala



Nawang Tashi at the Indian Institute of Technology in Mumbai

Student Activities



Young students exercising their democratic right to public protest in Kaza

The Central Board of Central Education is now the examining board for our schools. We gradually improved our school infrastructure and teacher qualifications and thus were recently able to meet their criteria for affiliation. Then our students this year, for the first time, had the challenge of taking their more exacting examinations. Happily, we had a 100% pass rate, 52 students in 10th grade, (age about 16) and 12 students in 12th grade (age about 18).

With this board, students had the chance for the first time ever to test their knowledge of our native language, Bhoti, i.e. Tibetan, in an external examination. It is the language of the songs through which our traditions are passed on and the language of our spiritual culture. Unfortunately, Bhoti, as our language is called in India, is not given the status it deserves at national level so our children this year participated in a demonstration at Kaza our local administrative headquarters, calling for more official recognition for it. ☺

Environment Day and Tree Care




Working with the Indian Army to keep the community clean (above) with students taking care of local trees (right)



Recent Pictures of Munsel-ling School



Vikram Sharma and his sister, Neetika Sharma, who was a volunteer at the school when she was Miss Himachal Pradesh 2019, have recently made a documentary about about the children of Spiti. For an up-to-date glimpse of young people in the Spiti

Valley and the contribution that the Rinchen Zangpo Society is making to their welfare, see their creative fifteen-minute video, the Children of Spiti: Munsel-ling Home School, on YouTube: 

<https://youtu.be/sOYF2lmiwtU?si=kOGkeZ-4pmsNfHn>



A bird's-eye-view of Munsel-ling campus (top) with students gathered for morning assembly (bottom)

School Student Statistics, 2023

Munsel-ling School, Rangrik	454	mixed boarders and day students
Kaza Public School, Kaza	257	day students
Rewa Primary School, Rongtong	104	boarders
New Nalanda Pre and Primary School, Chango	74	day students

Total 889 well-educated students!

Thanks to everyone who contributed to our education programme this year. Great apologies to anyone we have forgotten. Apart from those already mentioned above we extend special thanks to:

Zoe Maogany, France
Jackie Bushe, Ireland
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Jaqueline & friends, France

Nantwich Buddhist Group
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Fulwood Old Chapel, Sheffield, UK
Michel & friends, France

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