



«We younger ones must solve Nepal's problems»

The award on the wall above Rohan's bed reminds him of having made a big step towards realising his dream. In a football tournament of teams from different schools, he scored among the top three strikers. Since one year, the Sertshang Orphanage Home has its own football team, founded by the older boys, who train on the orphanage's forecourt or on a public football field near the school, where they play together with other boys.

In Nepal, both rising prices and an increased interest in football are an effect of globalisation. Though cricket is the most renowned and popular team sport in Asia, football is becoming increasingly important. Nepalese TV broadcasts several major matches. Rohan has been watching some of them. In the library, he managed to obtain a world chart. He wants to know, where Barcelona is, where Lionel Messi lives and he asks why there are no Swiss players among the world's best.

Before breakfast, Rohan does countless pushups, because he wants to become an international football player, like Anil Gurung, who made it to F.C.Chelsea's backup team. Rohan does not only dream

of a career as a football pro. He also has a clear idea of what he would do later on: come back to Nepal become the national football team's trainer.

As ambitious and phantastic some of the dreams in the orphanage may be, they are increasingly connected with Nepal's future. A future, the older orphans increasingly have to deal with. 19 out of 49 children are now between 14 and 18 years of age, attending the 8th to 10th class in school. Most of them are aware that these school years are decisive. The possibility of attending college depends on their marks in primary school-leaving qualifications.

Likewise, they are aware that later on, even a university degree does not guarantee a job contract. „Only the rich can afford good education“, 16-year old Dolma wrote in her school notes. „But the country does not even have enough job positions for them, so they leave their home.“ Even today, unemployment rates are more than 40% of the population. It is not only the medics, engineers and nurses, who leave to foreign countries. Cheap labour on construction sites or in house care work draw many Nepalis to the gulf states, Malaysia or Singapore.

„The poor can consider themselves lucky, if they manage to complete primary school“, Dolma writes. A few lines further down in her notes, she underlined a sentence: „We,

extended twice since then, now being due in mid 2012. As long as political quarreling continues, no stable government can be formed, this being a prerequisite for the structural reforms in education, agriculture, administration and industry.



Confidence and Future

The children are well-informed about these contexts. Kathmandu sees growing awareness that only a young, unspoilt generation can lead Nepal out of its current deadlocks. Spontaneous demonstrations and newspaper articles remind of the many young that fought for a new and fair society in the years of the civil war 1996-2006.

40% of the population is aged between 18 and 40. „If they do not take a lead, I see no future for Nepal“ says one of the teachers. 18-year old Pasamsa is full of optimism. Until three years ago, she and her two younger sisters lived in the Sertshang Orphanage Home. Her father, who had sought work on India after her mother's death, returned to Nepal and took care of his daughters. Today, Pasamsa attends a college. Due to her excellent marks, she has been granted a scholarship. She convinced her father that attending university instead of seeking a job is both better for her and the family. „He does not fully understand yet“, says Pasamsa, „but later on he will surely see that my decision was the right one.“

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Rage and disillusion

What can I do for my country? This question is not only written in big letters in the hallway of the small private school, the children attend. It is a question frequently asked in class, a major topic in the school books for the advanced classes. These school books are surprisingly up to date, showing the recent political and economical development and their effects. None of the euphoria of 2008 after the country's first free elections seems to be left. Disillusion and rage about political parties and corruption prevail. Still as of today, Nepal's young democracy has no constitution, because the political parties can not find an agreement. The constitution should have been established in 2010. Deadlines had to be

Pasamsa is from Humla, a village in the mountains, where most people can neither read nor write. From time to time, she visits her father, who has returned to his home village. „When he took to India and a relative sent us to Sertshang Orphanage Home, the neighbors spread rumours that he had sold us three“, says Pasamsa. „These rumours hit him hard and it was one of the reasons why he wanted to take responsibility after returning from India with sufficient savings to open a little shop in his village.“

Pasamsa also wishes to return to Humla one day. As a social worker, medic or teacher, she would like to help set up a medical center or a school. Until then, she



volunteers at the Sertshang Orphanage Home, helping with homework. „I was so fortunate to live here and attend school“, says Pasamsa and explains Columbus‘ first

discovery voyage route on the world chart to Rohan, whose finger keeps getting stuck on Barcelona.



New management and new premises stand the test

Since 2010, Tibetan Tenzin Kuntshok, together with house mother Methok Lama, have been managing the orphanage. Both have familiarised themselves well with their jobs. Kuntshok and Choegyel Rinpoche have completed their studies of buddhist philosophy in Kalimpong in 2009. Choegyel Rinpoche is the spiritual mentor to the orphanage. He is the son of Tibetan medic Tashi Sertshang, who founded the orphanage home. In March 2010, Choegyel left for a retreat in the mountains, where he will stay until at least 2013. In 2010, a second building on the orphanage’s site was completed, now housing the girls and the management. With this new building, the orphanage eventually has enough space. Aside to new class rooms, three guest rooms for volunteers and guests were established.

The site and the initial building were provided free of charge by Shamar Rinpoche, a high tibetan dignitary. So, untill 2009, no rent needed to be paid. The newly constructed house has a mortgage on it and due to Nepal’s inflation rate of 11%, interest rates keep rising. The Sertshang Orphanage Home association would therefore like to pay the mortgage as soon as possible. Private loans at little or no interest rate are thus needed to keep interest costs low.

Kathmandu
Brigitta Niederhauser
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Sertshang Orphanage Home Association

The association supports the orphanage in Kathmandu, which was founded by Tibetan medic Tashi Sertshang. All donations benefit the orphanage by a hundred percent, whereas all administrative costs are covered by the board of directors themselves.

The association is registered as tax-exempted in the Kanton Bern. Donations to the sister associations in Germany and Austria are tax-deductible.

Sertshang Orphanage Home

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Personal sponsorships

The children, who learn english at an early age, are happy to establish a personal relationship by letters or e-mail to their sponsors, who would like to follow their personal development.

Although costs of living in Nepal rise each year, sponsorship rates of 40 Swiss Francs / 30€ will remain stable in 2011, so as to enable the broadest possible circle of sponsors to take part.

For school money, new purchases and maintenance to the orphanage's infrastructure, the association depends on additional donations.

One-off donations

Donating once is of great help as well: e.g. a good quality football is available at 15 Swiss Francs / 10€ 20 to 60 Swiss Francs can buy current books for the library and 120 Swiss Francs / 80€ will cover the costs for a day trip for the entire orphanage. The children are especially fond of a river section they call Kathmandu Beach. The bus drive to this wonderful place near the Chinese border takes two hours. There, the water is still clean and swimming is safe also for the little ones.

Practical periods in the orphanage

In 2009, a high-school graduate from east Switzerland did 6 month practical period at the orphanage - an experience highly appreciated from both sides. His inspiring reports awoke the interest of a teacher of children with special needs, who spent some weeks with the children in 2010. In 2011, two young women supported the orphanage's management in a practical period prior to the start of their university studies.

Volunteers, who spend a practical period at the orphanage travel at their own expenses and need to cover their daily expenses themselves, while food and housing at the orphanage is free of charge

