

Ekerö 27 november 2011

Newsletter n ° 5, 2011

Hello, Tashi Delek and Namaste

(I will start with more impressions from our visit to Humla this summer.)

The Children's Home

The children's home is located in the outskirts of Yangar, a village in northwest Nepal. KMCH rent a house where the children, Chhukel, Pema and Naki live. Lapka and our



"wood cutter" Tundup are both from Yangar so they live in their own houses.

(Photo: Pema in the kitchen of the children's home.)

Chhukel has his own small room. Pema and Naki share a room with the two eldest girls. The other children sleep in the kitchen and in a combined sleeping and study room. All beds must be rolled up and placed along the walls in

the days so there will be place for study and for meals. There is also a small room that serves as the repository. The toilets are in a separate building and water for cooking, drinking, washing etc. they get from a hose just outside the children home.

The children wake up at 5 00 a.m. each morning. After they have washed and made their beds, it is time for the morning prayer. Breakfast is served at 6 00 a.m. and usually consists of tsampa (flour of roasted barley mixed with Tibetan butter tea). Between 6 30 a.m. and 8 00 a.m. it is time for homework led by Chhukel and Naki. After that it is time to play and rest until they are served a meal at 9 00 a.m. They go to school at 9 30 a.m. Lessons are between 10 00 a.m. and 4 p.m. with a short break to eat. KMCH provides packed lunches typically consisting of rice, lentils and vegetables.

When the children return from school they are served butter tea and tsampa again. They rest and play until 5 45 p.m. when it is time for study until 7 00 p.m. After that it's again a little time to play and rest before the evening prayer. Dinner is served at 8 00 p.m. After dinner they go to bed. It is a tough day not only for the children, but for all who work for

KMCH. Both Chhukel and Naki are teachers in the school and, along with Lakpa, share the ultimate responsibility for the children.

Of the 33 children there are 20 girls and 13 boys. This fall, KMCH has taken in a new 5 year old little girl whose parents have become ill and need help. The age of the children and which classes they attend are shown below. UKG stands for Upper Kinder Garten.

Age	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Students	1	2	1	5	11	3	4	2	2	0	2

Class	UKG	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number	7	9	9	3	3	1	1

Our Children

Once when we visited the children's home Pär interviewed a girl and a boy. He asked about their family relationship, about their time in KMCH and their prospects for the future. These mini interviews follow below.

The Girl: Pema Khando Lama, 10 years old

She has been at the KMCH for two years. Her native village is called Yalwang and it



takes 45 minutes to walk to it. She has a mother and a sister. She had a brother, but he drowned in the Karnali River when he was about 10 years. Her father died as a result of alcohol problems. As a result, the family has major economic problems as well.

"I like to live and be here at the Children's Home. I get training and good food. I like all food like rice, momos, tsampa and tukpa. It's best to be with other children. My favorite game is to jump rope. Badminton is the funniest sport. My biggest wish is to become

a building engineer. I do not want to marry and do not want to have children of my own."

The Boy: Gyaltzen Lama, 9 years old.

He has been at KMCH for three years. His native village is called Tumkot, a seven hour journey from the Home. He has a mother, father, brother and two sisters. When asked what his father does, he became very upset and cried but responded at the end that his father drinks



and is separated from his mother. It makes the situation very difficult for the family.

"I like momos, tukpa, dal and rice. And soft drinks! I drink it when I get money from my mother. I like the teachers I have now and I study English, math and grammar. I am good at math, and can easily count to one hundred in English. I want to become a teacher. My biggest wish is to teach children. I like best to play volleyball. I do not want to get married and have children. "

Children's Home or Boarding House?

We call our home for the children a "*children's home*". It is not an "*orphanage*" because most of the children have one or both

parents in their lives. None of the children are without both parents. Many supporters assume that the children in KMCH are orphans. But this is not the case. All the children, however, are poor and the families find it very difficult to take care of the children due to lack of arable land, illness and limited medical facilities,



alcoholism in the family, etc. Other than the poverty, the situation for the children in Upper Humla is more similar to that of nomad children. They must stay inherent in a family or in a home near a school to be able to go to school at all. "*Boarding House* or *School Home*" could perhaps be better concepts than Children Home. Despite this uncertainty, we continue to call our home for the children for "*Children Home*".

The Food

For breakfast, the children normally have *tsampa*. It is roasted barley mixed with butter tea. With a little bit of sugar or honey it really tastes good. Tsampa is the staple food of Tibet. For lunch and dinner they have *dal bat* (rice with lentil soup consisting of lenses, red onion, tomatoes and spices), *tukpa* (vegetable soup containing noodles and various vegetables such as potatoes, radish, leaf vegetables, tomato, red onions and spices), *momos* (steamed or fried packets of filled pasta) and *pancake* on flour and water. Flat bread cakes are often eaten. Dal bat is one of the most important dishes in India and Nepal like tsampa and momos are in Tibet and the areas of Nepal inhabited by Tibetan people. You eat with your right hand and normally without cutlery.

In the evenings when we sat around our camp fire we often spoke about Swedish traditional dishes, mostly including meat. Probably it was an unconscious reaction as we found the food to be quite monotonous. We got a bag of fresh yak cheese from Chembal's parents, who were in the mountains with the animals, and a packet of sardines which Richard has brought from Sweden to our surprise. These additions were highly appreciated.

Meat is eaten extremely rarely. According to Chembal, the reason is that Buddhists do not kill animals to have meat. They only have access to meat when an animal must be killed for some reason. They do not fish in the Karnali River, which flows through Humla, so they do not eat fish. Chembal did not even know if there are any fish in the River because no one has tried to fish.

The large portions of food for the children were striking. We were surprised because we could usually only eat about half the portion. None of the children seemed even slightly overweight, quite the contrary. Even the adults ate huge portions. Everyone walks a lot in the hilly terrain so they seem to need all the calories.

KMCH buys almost all food in Tibet. Lapka is responsible for the shopping and when necessary he takes his horses and goes to Tibet. Some vegetables are grown in our own greenhouses and some items can be purchased locally. The children's clothes are usually bought in Tibet.

During the cooking process they use pressure cookers to save firewood. Wood is used as efficiently as possible since it has become difficult to obtain. Over the years, the forest nearest the villages has disappeared and been replaced by bushes. This means that it takes long time to collect firewood. All techniques and ideas that could lead to a decreasing use of fire wood are therefore important to introduce and develop. Solar cells for lamps, more energy-efficient stoves, etc. could mean a lot in the long run to reduce deforestation.



Water treatment and tree planting

We brought with us a water treatment unit from Solvatten AB to test at the children's home. The unit is filled with 10 liters of water and exposed to the sun. After some hours – depending on the strength of the sunshine – the water is heated up to 55 degrees and the UV-radiation has killed the pathogens so the water is safe to drink. The water in the children's home is

usually safe so the Solvatten unit is often used for warming water for washing and pre-heating for cooking.

(Photo: Hans with the Solvatten unit)

Solvatten is the invention of a Swedish woman called Petra Wadström. Today it is primarily used in Africa. Our tests were successful and it would be good to deliver more units to the children home and introduce the technology in Humla. As usual, it is a question of money.

In order to safeguard future needs for firewood for heating, wood for construction purposes and forests for wild animals to live in, it requires substantial forest planting projects so that now deforested areas will be afforested.

One afternoon all the kids came up to our camp site carrying small trees and poles. They were cuttings of local tree species that the children had collected and were going to plant. This was a mini replanting project. Our intention was to train and learn. The children worked eagerly and trained with the picks when they were preparing the ground for planting. We felt a bit anxious when they wielded the picks close to their friends. None of the children's leaders reacted to this. They had apparently full confidence in the children's ability to handle the tools. It was just us Swedes, brought up in almost total security, who occasionally asked the children to be careful and make sure that at least a minimal safety distance was applied. Everything went well, and none were injured.



All adults and all children planted a cutting. Then we were randomly assigned responsibility for managing the cuttings between us. All were given the responsibility for one cutting. We Swedes had to hire some children to take care of our cuttings. According to Chembal, our small project has so far succeeded, because the plants have started to grow.

(Photo: Children preparing the ground for planting.)

Through this exercise, our children got a practical lesson. Through our information on why we planted cuttings they also learned how important it is to save existing forests and reforest now barren areas. This was hopefully the start of a replanting project on a larger scale under the management of KMCH.

(Continuation will follow in the next newsletter.)

Membership Notes

At the annual meeting in the spring of this year we adopted new statutes, including a modified definition of the concept of membership. Previously all those who have given

SEK 100 or more were automatically registered as members. In the new statutes one must request membership and pay an annual membership fee of SEK 100. The only difference between Donators and Member is that Members vote at the KMCH general meetings. Donations already received in 2011 can be applied toward membership. All are welcome to receive newsletters and other information from KMCH.



Contact Us

For information, please email us at info@kmchnepal.org or visit our website: www.kmchnepal.org

We collect stones for the new building for the Children's Home

With greetings from the Board of KMCH Support Group
by
Hans Alm



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