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KMCH Newsletter

23 juli 2023

Newsletter nr 2, 2023 from KMCH Support Group

Newsletter No. 2 begins with a description of the puja reading in Nepal for Hans Alm. The newsletter also contains a description of KMCH's upcoming project, a library at the school home, uplifting news about the health clinic in Challa, the launch of KMCH SG's new website, the latest updates from Chembal and from Nepal. The newsletter concludes with an event calendar. KMCH SG's new president, Pernilla Smith introduces herself at the end of the letter.

Puja for Hans Alm

At KMCH's school home, monks from the Namkha Khyung Dzong monastery in Yalbang have been conducting puja readings for Hans Alm every Thursday for seven weeks. Here's how Chembal Lama and Sonam Rinchen Lama describe why the 7 weeks of puja for Hans are so important: "We Buddhists have a belief that a soul will remain peaceful in heaven." For Buddhists, the physical body dies, but the mind continues its activity in a different form. The significance of 7 weeks, 49 days, comes from the 49 days that Buddha meditated under the Bodhi Tree in BodhGaya (in northern India).

Contribution to the next project at the school home - Hans Alm Library

KMCH's next project is a library for the children living in the school home up in Humla. We received the very first books in January during the exhibition about the school home in Kathmandu.

In connection with Hans Alm's funeral, almost 71,000 SEK (Swedish Krona) was donated. The majority of the contributions will be used for the library, which will be named the Hans Alm Library.



The sign that will be placed at the library is already available, see below. The company "Screenteam Reklamproduktion" has created it as a gift to KMCH.



KMCH is soon launching a new website

We are currently working on a new website. It will include everything the old one had, but with a fresh new design and enhanced functionality. KMCH has also adopted a new logo, designed by Matilda Pallin. Her brother, Oscar Pallin, is developing our new website. When the site is ready for launch, it will be announced, among other channels, through

our Facebook group. KMCH has opted to switch email services, as the new service integrates better with the technology used to build the website.

Fantastic joyful news: The health clinic in the remote village of Challa is now operational



KMCH's most important task is to provide children from inaccessible villages with a good education. The dream is for them to return and contribute to the development. This is not an easy choice after experiencing life in the bustling Kathmandu, and we don't impose such demands.

But now, Sonam Lama, one of the first of our school home children, has returned to her hometown of Challa, one of the most remote villages in upper Humla. She's returning after being educated as a "health assistant." It's a comprehensive medical education that enables her to make a real impact. We saw this during the years when KMCH operated a health clinic in our "school village" of Yalwang. Her education was made possible thanks to the Swedish association *Gatubarn i Nepal*, which has a healthcare program and supported her during her six years of study in Kathmandu.

There was already a small health center in Challa, but like many other places in rural Nepal, it had no staff. So, it's only now that Sonam's arrival allows the people up there to receive the much-needed medical assistance.

During her initial time in Challa, Sonam was accompanied by Chhring, who has extensive experience as a health assistant. Now, Chhring works at the health clinic in Yalwang. The dream is for it to develop into a functional medical facility.

Latest news from the school home

Chembal shared the latest updates from the school home when he attended Hans Alm's funeral in early May:

Now 67 children reside in the school home, 33 girls and 34 boys. KMCH covers the salaries for seven adults: two teachers (one teaches the children in their school, the other instructs and assists the children in the school home in the morning and evening, while also working as the school home's gardener), a supervisor with his wife (who functions as an additional mother figure for the children), a storekeeper (who procures essential supplies), a firewood chopper, and a cook.

The tree planting project is progressing well. It includes apple, apricot, and walnut trees. This initiative has inspired nearby villagers, and the fruit and nuts are consumed by the children. The school home's greenhouse has also been an inspiration, leading to the construction of many greenhouses in the vicinity.

The addition of a library is welcomed, and it should be open to both the children and the nearby villagers. One of the staff members must take responsibility for the library, ideally in collaboration with some of the older children.



Chembal receives the sign for the library. Eddy Sandberg stands to the left, and Italo Pilotti stands to the right..

News from Nepal

Just like here, climate change is becoming more evident with each passing year. May is typically a hot month, especially in the Tarai region, the plains in the southern part of Nepal. This year, temperature records have been broken in many places. Heatwaves have also affected areas further north, even at higher altitudes. Kathmandu, located at an elevation of 1300 meters, has experienced unusually low rainfall this year and many days with temperatures well above thirty degrees Celsius. Mosquito-borne diseases such as Dengue, Zika, and unfortunately even Malaria are becoming increasingly common, even in mountainous districts.

The recurring forest fires have also contributed to worsening air quality in larger cities, especially in the Kathmandu Valley, making it even worse than usual.

In recent days, thirty individuals, including several former ministers, were charged. They are accused of providing Nepalese citizens with fake documents. These documents were intended to make it easier for them to obtain visas to the United States. Suddenly, the applicants were no longer Nepalese but rather refugees from Bhutan.

While it's disheartening to read about this ongoing corruption, it's hopeful that these individuals are being exposed with their hands in the cookie jar.

Italo Pilotti

KMCH Support Group on Tour

On July 8th, at **Mannaminne** in Nordingrå, we informed about twenty individuals about our school home. The presentation was embellished with singing and music by Eva Ollinen and Bengt Andersson. We also screened Gustav Nord's wonderful film about the school home. Parts of the same exhibition that we showcased earlier this year in Kathmandu were displayed on the walls of Rundlogen. After the presentation, we took down the exhibition.



Eva and Bengt sing and play for the audience at Mannaminne.

The next morning, we headed to **Risudden** in Tornedalen with the entire exhibition. There, we set it up again and repeated the performance from Mannaminne on July 12th. Over twenty people attended, listened, and enjoyed some refreshments. The event was part of Risudden's cultural week, which takes place every year in the old school.



The villagers came to Risudden's old school to see the exhibition about our school home in Humla, listen to us talk about it, and enjoy some refreshments.

Later everything was dismantled and packed; the model over our school home, the prayer flags and all the photos and texts. Everything is back on display at *Rundlogen* at the museum **Mannaminne** until 31 August.

Ongoing and upcoming exhibitions and events

The exhibition about KMCH's school home in Humla is available at **Mannaminne** in Nordingrå until **August 31st**.

On **Saturday, September 9th**, KMCH had a booth at **Ekebyhovsparken** in Ekerö. Hand-knitted gloves, fabric bags, jewelry from Nepal, birdhouses, and more were available for purchase. All proceeds go directly to the school home.

On **Tuesday, November 14th**, there will be a presentation about KMCH in two places. One will be at **Jämshögs Folk High School** in Blekinge, and the other will be hosted by **PRO Ekerö** in a location yet to be determined.

The KMCH board is more than willing to share information about the school home in more places. Feel free to contact any of us on the board for arrangements.

A few words from our New Chairman

Hans Alm mentioned that everything had started in the 1950s, with a book. It was then that he read "Seven Years in Tibet" by Heinrich Harrer. The book ignited a longing in Hans to one day embark on a journey around some of the world's holiest pilgrimage sites: Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar in Tibet. Despite spending years in Tibet, there was something Heinrich Harrer hadn't accomplished, and that became Hans's goal. It wasn't until 1997 that Hans realized his dream. It was during this trip that he got to know Chembal Lama. At that time, Chembal was a young monk who wanted to offer tea at the monastery where he lived. Hans encountered Chembal along the caravan routes through Humla, Nepal, just south of the pilgrimage sites of Kailash and Manasarovar. Those who have followed us throughout the years know that their friendship and connection marked the start of what became KMCH in Nepal and KMCH Support Group in Sweden. The organizations are named after these pilgrimage sites: Kailash Manasarovar Children of Humla.

For me, my involvement with KMCH also began with a few intriguing words. "I also have a children's home, but in Nepal." The year was 2007, and the words came from a man sitting next to me at an event at the Swedish-Tibetan School and Culture Association. The association had built 108 schools for Tibetan children in China. The man leaned forward

slightly and almost whispered the words that caught my attention. It was Hans, the man I had ended up next to. He told me in passing, and not without some pride, that he and his friends had recently started a children's home in Humla, Nepal. At that time, we referred to it as a children's home, as it was the children's home when they were away from home to attend school.

Whether it was chance or karma that caused our paths to cross again, I can't say. However, it was unlikely that shortly after, my husband, Jan, had the opportunity to work with a young Swedish man who had started a quite unique IT company in Nepal. So, the next time I happened to run into Hans, I recognized him, and it was my turn to say hello and tell him about Jan's unusual new assignment and that we were going to Kathmandu soon. "Great," Hans said briefly, "you can bring a bank card for the children's home that they can use for withdrawals." Done and done, we exchanged contact details. Shortly after, I received a bank card, an address in Nayapati in the Kathmandu Valley, and I had my first assignment in Nepal.

Through various interesting paths, which are too convoluted to include here but involve a very special dream, Crown Princess Victoria, Indiana Jones, a malamute, and a certain sled dog breeder in California, I got in touch with Rumi Gurung, who would help us find the children's home. Jan's boss had booked rooms for us during our visit, at the Moonlight Hotel in Thamel. Rumi was going to meet us and asked where we were staying. She was quite surprised that we were staying at that particular hotel, out of all the hundreds of hotels in the tourist-heavy neighborhood, which happened to be owned by her brother. So, she had no trouble finding us. Rumi herself comes from Mustang, and as a young child, she was sent far away to attend school, separated from her parents for a long time. Education had given her a good job and the ability to support herself and help her parents financially. She learned English, traveled, and worked internationally. But her childhood, separated from her parents, was difficult for her, as it is for so many other children in the Himalayas. Mustang has developed economically with external efforts, but culturally, it changed, and old ways of life disappeared, for better and for worse. It was incredibly valuable to hear about her experiences.

With Rumi's help and a taxi, it wasn't difficult to find the children's home, which, at that time in 2008, was located in the Kathmandu Valley because schools in the mountain villages of Humla had been closed due to the civil war and the havoc wreaked by the Maoist guerrillas. Chembal Lama wasn't there, but two young men who lived there and played ball with the children welcomed us. They also accepted the bank card that I handed over. They were shy, so there wasn't much talking, just a bit of play and ball games with the children.

Yes, that was my first contact with Hans and the children from Humla. When I returned to Sweden, I asked Hans if I could join the board, and I was welcomed. Hans has recently

left this earthly life, and I am now the newly appointed chairman of the association's board. Chembal Lama, who has known Hans since 1997, was in Sweden in May to attend the funeral, and the board had a valuable opportunity to discuss the continued work for the children from Humla with Chembal.

As we inform in the newsletter, we will be starting a library at the school home named after Hans Alm. Words and books were important to Hans. With words and images, we convey knowledge, and we can engage in the lives and experiences of others, finding inspiration to travel and transform. My hope is also that the children will continue to read and not only be inspired to explore the world through the magic of words but also to want to write and tell their own stories.

Finally, a warm thank you from us on the board to all of you who donated money in connection with Hans's funeral and to those who support KMCH's work in Humla in other ways.

Pernilla Smith



Greetings from the board of KMCH Support Group
by
Pernilla och Ann



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