

impossible to contain the security situation. Theft and robberies are increasing and the conflict between the locals and the other pickers is intensifying. The point of contention is who is allowed to pick in which areas.

In the previous early summer the violence in Dolpo reached a sad climax when the situation in the neighbouring valley in Do-Tarap escalated. Representatives of the local population demanded that the local government should protect the highland pastures from the onslaught of the pickers because they need them as fields for their livestock. Moreover, the representatives were adamant that the local committee is allowed to levy taxes from the pickers to implement the necessary infrastructure improvements. This had been prohibited by the buffer zone committee of the Shey Phoksumdo National Park. As the local government and the representatives of the buffer zone, who earn a lot of money through the allocation of picking licences (and do not reinvest it in infrastructure and security), did not agree to this, protesters gathered. The situation turned violent when the flown in police started beating the attendants with sticks. The protestors threw stones and the police retaliated by shooting rubber bullets. They conducted house searches and thrashed the residents randomly. Two people died and more than forty were injured. The police tried to cover up the incident by listing the cause of death as natural and preventing an autopsy. The local population feels overlooked in the decision-making process and profit of the Yartsa Gunbu business, whereas they are the only ones who have to live with the environmental damages caused by the picking. A ray of hope is that thanks to the new mobile antennae a few educated local people placed photographs and wrote about the incident on Facebook.

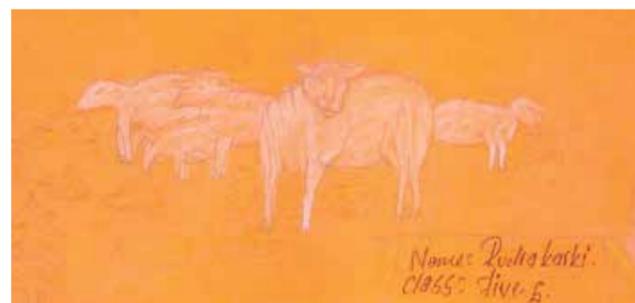
As a result they achieved the attention of the media and after a long struggle also of the human rights commission. In this way, for the first time they could convey their version of the incident. The negotiations are still ongoing.

In February two articles on the brown gold rush in Dolpo and the pilgrimage to Shey by our NGO president Marietta Kind will be published in the magazine of the Swiss Alpine Club *Die Alpen*.

Events

General Assembly: The Taprizia general assembly will be held on Friday, the 19th of June 2015, at 7 pm in the Quartiertreff Hirslanden, Forchstrasse 248, 8032 Zürich, Tram 11 to Burgwies.

Old Roads, New Ways - Traders, Yaks and chinese Trucks in the Himalaya: Photographic presentation by the social anthropologist Martin Saxer, Friday, the 13th of March 2015, 7:30 pm, Songtsen House, www.songtsenhouse.ch.



Photographs (Manuel Bauer, Semduk Lama, and Yonten Pasang)

- 1, 9, 10 Everyday life at the Taprizia School. (MB)
- 2, 3 The nurse Pasang Dolma at work in the medical post of Chunuwar. (SL)
- 4 The new water filter PAUL in use. (SL)
- 5 Kindergartners at the Taprizia School. (SL)
- 6, 7, 8 Yartsa Gunbu, the caterpillar fungus. From the search to the discovery at over 4000 meters to the dried final product. (YP)



for the tibetan sheep woolen yaks, beginning on the 19th of february 2015 we wish you all good luck and blessings!

Marietta Kind, Jenny Bentley and the Taprizia team



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NEWSLETTER 2015

The Taprizia School is still top!



Anew the Taprizia School acquired the top position among the 13 secondary schools in Dolpo in the national final exams. We are proud of our students! On this occasion we would also like to thank our highly reliable and loyal team of teachers. With verve and dedication, every year they achieve great results despite the simple conditions at the school. The Taprizia School has grown considerably in the past years and the classes of the final year are becoming larger. At present there are 13 students learning for the school leaving exams in the winter school in Kathmandu. Teachers in Kathmandu help the students and trim their abilities to fit the urban school system. The teachers explain the curriculum with more modern methods and assist the students in catching up on the content missed during the winter months.

With a few exceptions the teachers at our school are not from the region. Despite this, they live in remote Dolpo for nine months, far away from their families. Increasingly, they want to participate in teachers' trainings. Therefore, in the winter additional advanced education

courses are planned in Kathmandu so that they can acquire knowledge on new didactical methods, teaching aids, and mediums. In the mean time the usage of new mediums such as computers is increasingly possible at the school, because electricity is available. Computers are especially required in the senior secondary level so that the children are optimally prepared for life in present-day Nepal and for a possible continuance of their education.

It is extremely difficult to get teachers with higher degrees for the senior secondary level and even harder to keep them at the school for a longer time period. After teaching for a short time some are lured away from other schools, which are either located closer to their homes or can pay them higher salaries. For these well-educated teachers the work at the Taprizia School is a stepping-stone for their further career. To make the working place more attractive and keep the teachers committed for longer, we try to adjust the salaries of the private teachers to the ones of the Nepali government.



Health Posts, Birthing Clinic, and Hygiene

For some time now the **Tapriza NGO**, together with Dr. Hans Marty and Claudia Schmid, is trying to improve the health situation in Dolpo. These efforts remain like a drop in the ocean as long as the government does not ameliorate their health care system. For the local population, however, our important endeavour can make the difference between life and death and has significantly improved the living conditions. Additionally to the health post in Chunuwar, situated on the opposite bank of the river from the Tapriza School, the Phoksumdo health stations were upgraded in Ringmo and Pugmo thanks to the generous support of the **Nicole Nicquille Foundation** and the **Medics Holding AG**. They are simple rooms equipped with clean water and a basis supply of medicines. Now Pasang Dolma, the nurse supported by us (financed by the **Soroptimist Club Zürich**), has got her hands full. She commutes between the health posts and examines and treats the sick. If necessary she makes house calls. As much as possible from the distance, Dr. Marty gives her advise, for example in the choice and usage of medicine in the health posts.

The main post in Chunuwar was expanded into a simple birthing clinic. In rural Nepal the mother and child mortality rate during birth is still very high. Professional care and the necessary hygiene during birth can save many lives. The NGO **One Heart World Wide** sponsored the equipment of the clinic. Besides a special birthing bed and other utensils there now is an ultrasound unit with which prenatal examinations are possible. The nurse Pasang Dolma received an advanced training in how to use ultrasound on pregnant women. In the mountain villages it was to date not possible to see the unborn child and monitor the growth of the foetus. By the end of the year she had examined twelve pregnant women with the sonographic unit. Until now five women have given birth to healthy children under Pasang Dolma's care.



The **Tapriza NGO** still supports school graduates in their further education. Currently four former Tapriza students are being trained as health workers with the support of the **Soroptimist Club Zürich**. Thanks to our support the former students can return to their home educated and earn a living with this important task. The present state health officers are not from the region and are hardly ever met working at the health posts, except when official visits are announced. By training local people the aim is to increase the chances that in future they remain on-site and in this way ensure a better health care. Their salary is to be paid by the government in future. In coordination with others Semduk Lama, president of our partner organisation **TASHI-D.**, is requesting the government on this behalf. He has accomplished that the government covers a part of Pasang Dolma's salary.

Once more the hygiene situation at the school has been improved. Dr. Hans Rohde facilitated a PAUL water filter for the school. The teachers and students are enthusiastic and regularly drink the filtered water.

In the coming year the Tapriza teachers are to be trained in first aid. Our nurse Pasang Dolma is often the lone responsible for three health posts, because the government workers are rarely present. Consequently, she is fre-



quently not present when a child gets hurt, wounds need to be cleaned or an illness is to be treated at the school. The teachers, however, do not have the basic medical knowledge. Therefore, they are to receive the necessary training to treat rashes and children's illnesses. We hope that soon more trained health workers will start their duty and the health post can be permanently staffed.

Violence around the caterpillar fungus

Yartsa Gunbu (*Cordyceps sinensis*) is the «Gold of the Himalayas», the search for the caterpillar fungus resembles a gold rush. Every year thousands travel into the remote Dolpo on the search for the precious, strengthening, and aphrodisiac caterpillar fungus. The secluded mountain valleys turn into tent cities and attract large crowds of people. Many pickers leave their traces around the school, especially their garbage. The eco-club of the Tapriza School has begun to dig garbage dumps and do educational campaigns on the protection of nature and proper garbage disposal. Nevertheless, garbage remains a problem.

Children are particularly talented in searching for Yartsa Gunbu, because their eyes are sharp and they move closer to the ground. For the families usually living self-



sufficiently, the earning from selling the fungus is an unparalleled opportunity to improve their annual income. That is why we decided to comply with the parents' needs and introduced Yartsa Gunbu holidays for students of the classes five to ten. Many former students are also commonly encountered on the upland pastures as they finance their studies with the precious caterpillar fungus.

A side effect of the «gold rush» is that everywhere provision tents are set up. They serve as food stores, restaurants, and above all bars. During the picking season alcohol is consumed in abundance. The tents in the vicinity of the school have been causing problems for quite some time now. In the last year for once it was decided not to organise a cultural show with dance and theatre at the school to prevent escalations. For when the Tapriza School invites, the parents and villagers travel from near and far to attend the entertainment. The tent operators look forward to the good business with the visitors of the school. For some alcohol and gambling have become a common habit so that a part of the audience reaches the school premises already drunk.

Another consequence of the «picking fever» is the growing criminality. Until recently, violent disorder was rare in this region. In the Yartsa Gunbu season, however, it is

