



The Tapriza school is festively decorated and equipped with a stage for the following dances, award ceremonies and speeches.

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## General Assembly – 25 years

Would you like to join in the celebrations and find out more about the anniversary, school operations and projects? Then come to the annual Tapriza General Assembly.

**Freitag, June 21, 2024** at 7 p.m. At the Quartiertreff Hirslanden, Forchstrasse 248, 8032 Zürich.  
We look forward to welcoming many guests!

## Tapriza NGO

Since 1998, the Tapriza NGO supports the running of the Tapriza School as well as health projects, the preservation of cultural assets, and the improvement of infrastructure in the remote district of Dolpo in north-west Nepal. Since the beginning, our local partner organization TASHI-D, in which parents and locals participate, has been responsible for the implementation. The school is recognized and supported by the Nepal government. More at [www.tapriza.org](http://www.tapriza.org)

## Your donation helps to shape the future of children in Dolpo.

Tapriza, Bahnhofstr. 35, 8001 Zürich  
ZKB: CH47 0070 0114 9008 5899 9  
Postfinance: CH30 0900 0000 8752 2110 0

## BergFrau.ch

Our board member Claudia Schmid offers trips to Dolpo with a visit to the school.



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# NEWSLETTER 2024



## 25 Years Tapriza School – a three-day-long anniversary celebration

*The anniversary took place in October 2023. Our president Marietta Kind Furger travelled from Switzerland with her husband Urs Furger and daughter Lili Furger as well as our founding member Rebecca Gericke. The latter compiled the following report of the celebrations while Lili Furger narrates her visit from the perspective of a student.*

### From Zürich to the Himalaya

On October 9, the four of us set off on our journey to Dolpo to attend the celebrations marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tapriza School. After stopovers in Doha, Kathmandu and Nepalganj, we fly to Dolpo in a mini airplane. From here onwards, its footpaths instead of roads and legs instead of wheels, be it our own two or those of horses that patiently carry our rucksacks. Gyamcho, a Tapriza alumni, guide, and specialist in electrical installation, accompanies us on the three-day walk to the school. The path leads along the turquoise-coloured foaming river and every now and then a white snow-covered peak of a «multi-thousander» flashes into

view. The further north we march, the more Tibetan culture becomes: thick woven woollen fabrics replace gold-embroidered robes, more and more people speak Tibetan instead of Nepali, people drink butter tea instead of chai and herds of yaks become increasingly common.

### 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations

When we arrive at the Tapriza School, we are warmly welcomed by the school management duo Ram Chandra and Semduk Lama and the teaching staff with *kbatas* and Coca-Cola and «lucky butter». All the schoolchildren line our path holding flowers they have picked themselves. The freshly painted school buildings with their bright blue roofs look inviting. Together with the monastery-like library and ceremonial building, they enclose the spacious schoolyard, the «heart of the school». We make ourselves at home in an empty classroom and are served *dbalbbat* (lentils with rice) and *tatopani* (hot water) daily together with the teachers every day.



Traditional Tibetan welcome song.

The school grounds are a hive of activity. The stage is set up and everything is prepared for the party. A jubilee football tournament takes place; the Tapriz White team with the very agile «Seven» wins! The younger children play «Chocolate Catching» and everyone receives new school backpacks and tracksuits with the Tapriz logo. The next day, the festivities continue and numerous guests from the surrounding villages have arrived. During a ceremony lasting several hours, local politicians and religious representatives praise the school's achievements and its positive impact on the future of the people in Dolpo. They also repeatedly emphasise the importance of the Tapriz NGO Switzerland and Marietta Kind's commitment to the school that significantly contributes to keeping the school running. The evening program starts with an illustrated journey through time from the beginning of the school by Marietta Kind, followed by dance performances by the students and a lot of clapping and cheering. Finally, all the children dance on stage in the «ad hoc disco», while the adults form a circle dancing and singing the traditional Tibetan style. While the disco runs out of power at some point, the «old» people dance in circles for the whole night until dawn. As a Dolpo newcomer, I am surprised at how enthusiastic the people in this mountain valley are about dancing. Further ceremonies follow on the second day, in particular the best pupils are felicitated in every conceivable



Traditional and modern dances are performed until late into the night.



Traditional songs are sung.

category from mathematics and language to musical chairs. Overall, I am struck by the good atmosphere and also by how strongly the children, parents and valley residents identify with the school and are proud of the well-functioning institution. After a detour to Ringmo and the deep blue waters of Lake Phoksumdo, we return to the school for a few more days and are able to witness the day-to-day activities. In the following, Lili Furger reports on this.

*Rebecca Gericke*

#### A typical school day

The daily routine at the Tapriz School begins at 6:30 a.m. with morning prayers. Without the supervision of a teacher, this ritual proceeds smoothly; the students routinely beat the rhythm and recite a half-hour morning prayer. Afterwards, they all have tea, which they themselves mix with *tsampa* (roasted barley flour). At 8:30 a.m., everyone gathers in the courtyard. They line up in long rows according to class and sing their national anthem. After morning gymnastics, lessons begin at 9:00 a.m. according to the daily recurring timetable. What is particularly impressive is that the pupils learn three languages, all of which have a different script: Nepali, Tibetan, and English. This linguistic diversity is a challenge



The little ones compete for sweets.



Anniversary soccer tournament, here the highly motivated girls at the match.

that is almost unimaginable to us who often struggle with three languages of the same script. The long break follows at 10:00 a.m. and *dbalbbat* is served. For a change, once a week we have *dindo*, a kind of polenta with a spicy sauce. But *dbalbbat* is the undisputed favourite dish for many. It is eaten by hand in small groups crouching on the floor. Afterwards, the schoolchildren stream off to their respective next lesson. The lessons are very different from the ones we are used to. When the teacher asks a question, everyone is active and shouts their answers into the room, creating a confusion. This may take some getting used to for us Westerners, but the teachers remain calm and respond to the suggested solutions. For the youth of the tenth grade, lessons end at 4:00 p.m., followed by free time until 6:00 p.m. After dinner, study time begins at 7:30 p.m., during which the students study in their rooms, rehearsing loudly and helter-skelter. At 22:00 p.m., the monk and teacher Dawa makes his evening round, the night's rest begins.

#### Different social behaviour compared to Switzerland – from a seventeen-year-old pupil's perspective

The fact that the students learn and live at the Tapriz School and can hardly go home is a challenge, especially for the younger children. But living together brings them closer together and they



Children in class answer eagerly and loudly in chorus.



Best achievements in school, sport, dance, poetry.

have a strong sense of community. Everywhere you go, you see youngsters playing with the little ones, carrying them around or comforting them. The mutual fairness is impressive, no one is excluded, and tears are rarely seen. And if someone does cry, they are immediately taken care of.

I noticed that the older students do not have any fixed ideas about how you should be or what goes together. They can reinvent themselves in every area of life. Strong footballers, for example, can be seen playing devotedly with the little ones without losing any of their heroism. Girls who seem very shy in everyday school life suddenly turn up the heat when dancing and take the stage and the audience by storm. Diligence and commitment at school are admired at the Tapriz School, whereas here, unfortunately, they are often perceived as characteristics of negative nerdiness. It seems to me that our pigeonhole thinking has not made it to Dolpo. Fortunately, because these thought patterns can be very restrictive. Meeting these open-minded and cheerful people was a wonderful experience for me that will leave a lasting impression.

*Lili Furger*



The next generation helps out: Tsultrim Lama, Lili Furger, Suchan Budha.