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NEWSLETTER 2014



✓ 2 TADTA-Children's villages
✓ 506 Orphans
✓ Der Verein arbeitet
✓ 100 % ehrenamtlich

Dear Sponsors, godparents and friends of the TADRA-Project,

Two events relating to this year's developments in China and Tibet relevant for the Tadra Project.

First: Xi Jinping, the new prime minister of the People's Republic of China had already, on taking office one and a half years ago, announced the fight against corruption in China. The magnitude of corruption had, so to speak, taken drastic form for the communist nation, so therefore this task was more than necessary for the communist state to ensure its clear instinct for self preservation.

Hundreds of party officials managed to transfer not millions, but billions of public funds into their private accounts abroad.

At the same time, great numbers of migrant workers and peasants in China are living below subsistence levels. Corruption and the increasing gap between rich and poor in the PRC have therefore caused social problems that were threatening to become highly explosive, which demanded a fast and effective purgation or clean-up.

Meanwhile, a fraction of top ranking party members have been convicted and several of them are already under detention.

Eradicating these problems was therefore more than justifiable.

Although we ourselves, i.e. our children's homes, thank God never had problems of this kind with the responsible authorities, in China bakshish is otherwise very widespread. Practically nothing is possible without bribery.

Those who benefit from this system are always the rich; they could arrange for many things through their personal contacts and financial means. It is the poor, including us too, who are the losers in such a system. Therefore, we all appreciate and welcome this new policy very much.

Second: 2014 have been marked by tensions in Golok, our second Children's Village, on account of new regulations by the local administration for so-called private schools. The state has imposed a number of conditions in order that the schools continue "in an orderly manner".

The new regulations included aligning the salaries of the staff, teachers, house mothers, etc. with those of state schools, enlargement and modernization of the infrastructure, for example construction of a football field. The Chinese state appears to be wallowing in money at this time. A number of private schools that for financial reasons were unable to satisfy these requirements have had to close. We were in the fortunate situation that our solid, transparent work has brought us many financial supporters in both Europe and abroad, and also increasingly in China and Tibet, enabling us to undertake the required changes in full.

Despite all these sometimes unnecessary obstacles, we continue to take enormous pleasure from seeing how formerly poverty stricken orphans and street children can become educated, upright citizens. The number of children going on to an occupation is increasing from year to year. We all get great satisfaction from the fact that these young people, now adults, come back to work for free in the Children's Village as teachers or house mothers, either in their free time or before taking a job after qualifying. And as soon as there is a serious problem in the Village, they flood in from all over to help.

At the request of the former Tadra children we organized a reunion at the first Children's Village in Dawu/Kham. The Village became an event venue for two full days. Much Information was exchanged, people talked together, danced and cooked meals. Everybody was very grateful for this opportunity to meet their old friends in their "old home".

The highpoint of the summer in the second Children's Village in Golok was the visit of the Swiss ambassador on the occasion of the Villages' anniversary. This visit was a highlight in the history not only of the Children's Village itself, but also of all Golok, for the town rarely or never has had an opportunity to welcome such an important guest. You can read more about the ambassador's visit in Beat's detailed report.

All the staff and children are looking forward with huge excitement to 2015, when the twentieth anniversary will be celebrated in Dawu and the tenth in Golok, and we are expecting a large number of visitors from abroad. We are all so happy to have got this far at all, for we have seen many projects fall by the wayside in Tibet in this period. We are continually reminded of how our fantastic result would never have been possible without your regu-

lar year-long help. You make a huge contribution to this success, and as usual we wish to thank you once again this year for your trust in us and your support. After almost twenty years of existence we are quite optimistic to think that the Tadra project will last at least another twenty years, although by then some members of our team will probably no longer be with us.

Our most heartfelt thanks!

Choeni Tawo
 Choeni Tawo
 (1. Voesitzende)

Helga Fuhrmann
 Helga Fuhrmann
 (Schatzmeisterin)



Managers and members of the Tadra project with employees from Tibet and Choephel



Our indefatigable Swiss supporters, Tenzin and Beat

*WE WISH YOU A
 JOYOUS CHRISTMAS
 AND A
 HAPPY NEW YEAR!*

A VIP Visit at the TADRA Children's Village in Golok

by Beat Renz

July 25, 2014 saw great excitement in the TADRA Village in Golok. On all sides you could hear children and adults practicing the – for Tibetans so difficult word – “Excellency”. Most of them probably didn't really understand what it was all about, and what Excellency was coming to Golok that evening, but they all felt that they were on the threshold of an important visit to the TADRA Village.

Earlier in the spring I had received the wonderful news in Peking that the Swiss Ambassador Mr de Dardel was intending to make a highly personal visit to the TADRA Children's Village in Golok. We proposed July 26 as the best date, the day of the great children's festival, and so the Ambassador planned an official visit to the mega-city of Xining in Qinghai Province for that period. The local authorities were also in something of a flurry when they learnt of the Ambassador's intention to visit the roof of the world. The Village leader had to answer any number of questions, and it still remained unclear whether the Ambassador and his retinue would indeed be authorized to make this official visit to the Tibetan region. And indeed three days before his departure we received the bad news that the authorities of Qinghai Province had had to cancel the official reception and the meetings with the Ambassador in Xining at short notice. But to our great joy, the Ambassador nevertheless made the decision to undertake the long journey to the Province and visit – exclusively – the TADRA children's festival in Golok.

We Europeans of course plan everything in advance, but the Tibetans are past masters at improvisation. Needless to say, this small difference produced quite a lot of additional stress for me in the preparatory phase. The Embassy naturally wanted advance information about how the festival was going to take place, the guests, accommodation, and so on. But in the local tradition it is normal to invite guests only some 24 hours before the event, while the precise details tended to be established at the last moment.



The arrival of the Swiss Ambassador at the TADRA Children's Village in Golok

But with my years of experience I had learnt to trust that in the end everything always worked out well for the Tibetans. And once again I was not disappointed. Thupten Nyima, the head of the Village, and the teaching staff organized one of the best and most comfortable vehicles in Golok, an experienced driver and even an interpreter who spoke some German, to meet the Ambassador in Xining in good time. During the 9-hour journey they informed him of many local details and gave him a sense of the austere life of the nomads, and visited a monastery. A newly built luxury hotel was opened a week early in Golok just for the Ambassador. And so we were able to offer him worthy accommodation when he arrived late at night, tired but clearly happy. All day the Children's Village had been thoroughly tidied up and cleaned. And as before every children's festival all the children were given new clothes and shoes.

At last the big day of the festival was upon us. Everyone was thrilled that the dark rain clouds that had been hanging over Golok were swept away. Then I had my first shock of the day: I discovered that while I had indeed packed my smart suit carefully into a protective bag, I had left the jacket in Switzerland. And so for better or worse I was obliged to wear my red anorak, with which I was far from respecting the prescribed dress code, much to my embarrassment.

Seething with excitement, the children and employees all assembled at 7.30 in the schoolyard. The

approx. 230 Kinder were arranged on the steps according to their size, and not a peep was to be heard from these usually so boisterous TADRA children.

At 8.15 I departed for the hotel to fetch the Ambassador for the official reception and his first contact with the TADRA children. At 8.40, precisely on time, the car bearing the Ambassador arrived at the schoolyard. He got out and was greeted by three children in German, French and English. That at least was the plan, but in their excitement the children forgot part of the texts, so difficult for them. They covered up their little slips in their gracious way with a sweet smile. The Ambassador stepped to the line of waiting employees and greeted them warmly. Laden with lucky scarves around his neck, he finally stood before the children, who were so excited that I was worried that some of them could fall over. But no: they sang him a song, and then the Ambassador stood for a photo with them. We then took him on a visit to the Village and a tour of the infrastructure. Over the years the Children's Village had been equipped with some modern technology, and after breakfast it was possible for the founder of the TADRA Villages, Dr. Lobsang Palden Tawo, to welcome the Ambassador personally over the Internet. Sadly, the founding couple have not been granted a visa since 2008.

Then at 10 o'clock precisely, we went over to the festival area, which was composed of several Tibetan tents arranged in a circle and a large number of ta-



The Ambassador's first contact with the TADRA children

bles and chairs. In the centre was a red carpet that served as the stage. The various guests arrived, and we were honored to have the visit of the highest functionaries of Golok.

The children's performances then began under brilliant sunshine: in their colorful costumes they offered the most beautiful folk dances, songs and theatre. The high point of the event was a speech by the Ambassador which was translated into Chinese and Tibetan. He stressed the close cooperation between Switzerland and China, and described the many common characteristics his country shared with the Tibetan people and its landscape. He also spoke of the wide support and the good reputation enjoyed by the TADRA project in Switzerland and Germany.

After the children's festival we went back to the hotel, after which we visited the great monastery in Golok together and went up to a vantage point from which it was possible to catch a glimpse of the sacred mountain Anyemaqen wreathed in snow.

That evening the Ambassador wanted to meet with the children again. Arriving at the Village shortly before dusk, we found them occupied roasting meat on the long grill and dancing gaily to modern music. The earlier tensions had clearly dissolved, and soon the Ambassador found himself surrounded by these radiant children. This was perhaps the most important moment of the program, for it enabled the Ambassador to experience the children the way they always are, open, hearty and full of life. After his visit he wrote to us that he had been las-



Dressed in their colorful costumes, the children presented magnificent dances.



Between the different performances there was time for an exchange with the high funktionaries of Golok.

tingly impressed by the project and the children, and would like to come back on another visit. He invited the Village head to the great jubilee festival on the Swiss National Day in Peking, where we put up a TADRA information stand. There the Ambassador spoke of his visit to the TADRA children before the thousand or so guests present, and the proceeds of the great tombola went to the TADRA project.

Thank you Your Excellency most sincerely for your so appreciated visit to the TADRA Village und for all you have done for our project since! We will be enormously happy to welcome you once again in one of our Children's Villages.



By the time of the party in the evening the children had lost their fear and were once again in high spirits

Kelsang Choedon and her brothers' and sisters' fight for survival

by *Beat Renz*

Kelsang Choedon is now six years old. She first came to the Children's Village as a baby, and so she is unable to tell me her story. Now I sit together with Jampa, for many years our loyal Village leader, now retired. He brought almost all the TADRA children to the Village himself, with which he witnessed unimaginable squalor and hardship. The children adore him as a father figure and the TADRA project has much to thank this heartfelt man for.

When I asked Jampa to tell me Kelsang Choedon's story in May, he looked down for a long moment onto the wooden table between us. Then he began to



Kelsang Choedon (age 15 months) lived with her brothers and sifers miles from anywhere alone in the tent

speak, but after a moment the words became stuck in his throat, and he pulled out a handkerchief and wiped the tears from his eyes. It was clear that once again I was going to hear a very sad tale...

Kelsang Choedon's father abandoned his family before she was born, and went far away with another woman, leaving his pregnant wife and their four children in their nomad tent. They lived in the mountains some 4000 meters above sea level in the remote district of Yukon. The family lived in the utmost poverty with virtually nothing to their name.

Kelsang Choedon's mother died giving birth to her, and the baby and her two sisters and two brothers went into the care of their grandmother. About a year later, the grandmother died. At that time the oldest sister was 14 years young and suddenly found herself with an intolerable responsibility on her shoulders. Not only was she still a child herself but she also had the handicap of having only one hand. The children did what they could to organize their lives, going out early in the morning among the nomads to beg for some food. The older sister was often away from the family for several days at a time at the next village, a day's march away, to try to earn or beg some money. Most of the time the children had to leave Kelsang Choedon (age 15 months) alone in the tent. Once, when they got back, the baby had disappeared. Deeply worried, they all went looking for her and finally found her just as night was falling, luckily unharmed. To prevent her from wandering off again, the children decided to tie her down in the tent, so that she spent many days unable to move.

The little food they brought in was not sufficient to feed all five children, and they made soup with grass and wild plants.

Some nomads who came by contacted Jampa and told him of these neglected children. Jampa immediately set out to find them, first driving a whole morning to the Yukon district and then a further eight hours on horseback until he came to the children's tent. What he found there must have moved him very deeply, for as he told me the story, his tears began to flow once again. I did not want to sadden

him further and stopped my questions at this point.

In point of fact, our TADRA Village is not designed for children of very young age. Most of them come to us between the ages of 5 and 8. The house mother Ama Tsewang Choedon, a generous woman, took little Kelsang Choedon into her care and gave her all the love and affection she could. One of the sisters (now 12) could not attend the school and began an apprenticeship as seamstress in the TADRA vocational school in Dawu and later in Golok. At the present time she is doing a placement year in the huge town of Xining. The two brothers live together with Kelsang Choedon in TADRA Children's Village at Dawu, where they go to school. The oldest sister is seeking work in Yukon.

Little Kelsang Choedon attends the kindergarten. She is now a bright and lively child. Because she often wore tights with black and yellow stripes and buzzed rapidly around the village, she has earned herself the nickname of "Maya the Bee".

When I first met her some four years ago and tried to speak to her, she rushed to the house mother in fright and clung to her. Clearly she was very frightened of me. Some months later, the next time I saw her, I was sitting with the house mothers and the village crew in the reception hall where Kelsang Choedon was running around with all her energy, beaming with happiness. Playfully, I took one of the lucky scarves from around my neck and tried to catch her with it. When



Kelsang Choedon besucht heute den Kindergarten im TADRA-Kinderdorf Dawu

it caught around her belly, she began to scream in panic, and shocked, I immediately let her loose. When Jampa later told me how this poor little girl had been tied up for days in the tent alone, I understood her strong reaction to my attempt to catch her.

These “before and after” photos show how happily Kelsang Choedon can grow up in the TADRA village. I cannot bear to think what would have happened to these poor children without the TADRA project...



Kelsang Choeden with her 2 brother's, who are also living in Tadrachildren's village.

My Journey to the TADRA Village in Dawu – April 27 to May 11, 2014 *by Pascal Hirt / Switzerland*

Beat and I have known one another since we were kids. I have always thought of him as a modest and discreet man, so it was clear to me that this TADRA project had to be something special and unique. And I was not mistaken!

Early in 2014 Beat called to tell me there was a place free on the trip. Yees!!

With Beat there are no long discussions: everything is simple, clear and precise. The experience of his many trips shows through. We started on Sunday, April 27 in Geneva. Our flight was via Amsterdam to Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan.

As early as our first days in Chengdu I realized how much Beat took “his” children to heart. At the great market there he looked for only the best for them, clothes, shoes or toys. He bargained and haggled as though he were shopping for his own children..

We did not get permission to go to Golok, but for Dawu our papers were OK. I was already looking forward to the drive, despite Beat's lack of enthusi-



Pascal Hirt und Thupten Gyamtso (6) wurden im Kinderdorf enge Freunde

asm. Later I understood why: our ten hours of travel ended up becoming fifteen...

We got a good dose of adrenaline when we were stopped by a police check in Kangding. Would we be allowed to continue or would we have to turn back? We got through these formalities and had to wait a long time because of an accident on the road, but finally we made it to the pass at more than 4000 meters above sea level.

We finally arrived at Dawu in the evening. The whole village came out to greet us with huge smiles. The children were so sweet, still a bit shy, but then I am too. Hardly had we put down our bags when Beat came to say, "Now we'll go and kiss the children good night".

This was my first contact with the houses, the house mothers and the children. You can sense immediately that they are well. They laugh and they are happy. About thirty children live in each house, with four to six to a room. The smallest ones are delightful, running around wildly, and the older ones are always ready to help them. They all feel like they are one big family, however turbulent or even dramatic their start in life had been.

The next day gave me a better idea of the size of the TADRA Village, with its seven residential houses, the school, canteen and other buildings.

At the first meal, the children all wanted to have Beat or me at their table. They are so lovable, sharing whatever they have, and happy that we were there. They gobble up their food, which does not vary very much, very quickly, then go on to washing the dishes, which consists of shaking them briefly under cold water.

During our stay there was a school holiday for three days, which gave the two of us lots of opportunity to be with the children. As soon as they spied us in the schoolyard, they ran up and took us by the hand. We don't speak the same language, but it doesn't matter. We communicated with sign language, gestures or smiles. Love and human warmth always find a way...

As the days went on I understood more and more about the Village: its size, the infrastructure, all the things that have to be done, the enormous amount of work put out by the house mothers, the employees and Beat himself. Not only does he need to find sponsors, there is also much work for him to do in the Villages when he is there, here a damaged roof, there a sick child, and so on.

I also came to realize what the children have on their daily program. Out of bed before six o'clock, a quarter of an hour's jogging at 6:15, homework,

lessons, meals, study of difficult languages (Tibetan and Chinese), then more homework, and to round off the day, dancing and singing.

I love these melodious Tibetan songs and feel really privileged to be able to experience some of this beautiful yet heavily repressed culture so intimately. The moment we were all fearing, our departure, has come. The time there passed so quickly, but so many bonds were made. There they all stand, the adults with whom we sat so late into the night yesterday, and the children who look at us with sad eyes, hug us and give us drawings, little letters and bracelets; I am moved to tears.

Thank you dear children, you are extraordinary! Beat was right, you give us more than we can ever offer you.

Thank you for this wonderful journey, which will for ever remain in my heart.



Im TADRA-Dorf betrachten sich alle als Geschwister.
Bild: Yoyo und Zangthar Dolma - Kinderdorf Dawu

Day-to-day life in the Dawu Children's Village (3200 m above sea level)



Kelsang Lhamo is so happy with her new hand-knitted cuddly toy



The house mothers not only offer the children much loving care, they also put their hands to all sorts of other work.



With 263 children in his care, it is not always easy for Village head Kunga to have an overview...



The youngsters of the middle school wash their own clothes and shoes on school-free days.



The children practice difficult dance steps in the schoolyard on school-free days.



Pure love of life! - Rinzen and Lhamo are simply happy and contented.



The TADRA children don't think twice about sharing what they have.



Bema Choekyi celebrating her 11th birthday in Patrick house. All the children are thrilled that there is a birthday cake!



It's like Christmas and Easter combined! All excited, the children wait to receive new sneakers, socks, underwear and toys.



Jampa, our generous Village head, now "retired", still acts as the perfect father to his TADRA children



Sonam Choedon was one of the first TADRA children. Now she works as a teacher and like all the other ex-pupils, pays regular visits to the TADRA Village.



The children are very fond of the loving house mothers and help them whenever they can.



In spring the kitchen chef makes Tibetan cough syrup from different types of wood and plants.



Not all the children like this powerful cough syrup the way Rinzen Wangmo does!



Because the children do not eat snacks between meals, they all tuck in the great appetites at mealtimes.



The TADRA children genuinely enjoy going to school and compared with other schools they achieve excellent results.



Balloons are always a great favourite!

Our impressive excursion on Flower Mountain

by Beat Renz, Switzerland



In our own circles a school outing involving 270 children is going to be carefully planned long in advance and every detail foreseen. Not so in the TADRA Children's Village in Dawu, where at first we simply heard some rumors of a planned excursion to a mountain in the next few days... Neither the house mothers nor the children were better informed. One evening the Village head Kunga announced, "Tomorrow we go for an outing on Flower Mountain, starting 7.30". His words were received with enormous joy and the children were extremely excited by the prospect. And so once again I had an opportunity to be deeply impressed by these TADRA children.

Next morning I was sitting with Sabine and Andreas, two generous TADRA supporters from Germany, just after 7 o'clock at the breakfast table. Suddenly I heard voices outside, and through the window



Tsoto is happy to have arrived at the site of our midday meal.

we could see the first children already on the long walk to the mountain. We quickly put our things together so as to join one of the next groups. Hardly were we out of the house, the first raindrops began to fall on our heads. The threatening dark clouds in the sky did not offer much promise. Worried, I asked the Village head, "Do we really want to climb a high mountain in this weather?" He answered, "It's not raining hard, why not?" With that I confidently joined the next group and set off on the long walk. All the children were wearing blue tracksuits that normally served as their school uniform, but none of them had any rain protection or other kit with them.

500 meters on, we found ourselves before a steep incline, marked also by a wide serpentine path that seemed to have no end. But the children preferred to take the steep short cut up the mountain. The rain grew heavier, but I seemed to be the only one was bothered by this. The children marched gaily and in good spirits at my side, and took much more care of me than they worried about the weather. It didn't need clairvoyant powers to see that I was pretty much fagged out. In my defense, I should perhaps mention that we were some 3500 meters above sea level at that point. I could hardly admit to my poor condition, given that little children – the youngest were just 6 years old – were running next to me. From the very start, the older children wanted to relieve me of my heavy rucksack, and after about an hour, as I found my strength diminishing more and more, I gave up the struggle and passed it on. At that very moment the rain stopped. The weather became kind to the TADRA children, who had so looked forward to this outing, and from then on we had a

dry day and in part even sunshine.

Shortly before my strength gave out completely, we approached the summit of the mountain. And a new shock when we got there: in the distance were to be seen more, higher summits, and the children pointed excitedly to a small settlement, saying “That’s where we must go, that’s where the flower meadows are!”. At that point I had no idea how I was going to manage the endless long climb to get there. As I walked, I felt all these little hands on my hips pushing me on, while some took my hand and pulled me forward. If they could have done, they would have carried me... These TADRA children impress me so much, their concern for others, their readiness to help, their great sense of togetherness and their extraordinary social skills, even among the youngest of them. In all the hours of the walk I never heard a single complaint or moan. On the contrary, all their faces were radiant with joy, they were happy and content. The older children helped the smaller ones as a matter of course, and finally we all arrived at the little settlement, composed of just a few simple wooden dwellings. But we were not even at our destination yet, for the children again pointed up to the next high mountain and said, “Look, that’s where the flower meadows are”. I was swimming in perspiration and couldn’t take another step. Fortunately we stopped there to prepare lunch.



Tamba Tashi poses proudly with the flower garland he made.

Our chef arrived with the little village tractor, carrying huge pots and food and drink. The children immediately set about making three large fires. Without needing to be told, they all knew what had to be done. One group prepared the fire, another brought in water from the settlement, and another took care of the vegetables. As always, each of them went about his or her task without protest or argument. The cook prepared an excellent soup with meat for some 300 hungry children and adults, which we all devoured with a great appetite together with large chunks of bread.

Thus fortified, we continued up the mountain for another two hours. The next summit again seemed impossibly far and I became discouraged, thinking, “There is no way I can get there“. At that moment it was impossible for me to imagine that our planet contains still higher mountains than the one we were climbing! But after about an hour we finally



Exhausted but happy, we assemble at the flower meadows some 4000 meters above sea level.



The return walk down was much easier

arrived. Still I couldn't believe my eyes, for it was not even the highest point: in the distance I could see still higher summits. But to my great fortune and total relief, I saw that this was where the flower meadows were. We had reached them at last. The further summits were then a new target for the experienced Alpine climbers such as Sabine and Andreas and about half of the children.

The TADRA children settled down in small groups in the most beautiful colorful flower meadow. They made flower garlands and put them on their heads. Among the great number of different flowers I discovered edelweiss, learning that in Tibet these flowers, so rare in our country, grow like weeds. The children were simply happy. Some of them ran around the beautiful meadow, others enjoyed the breathtaking view or lay down and took in the warm sun's rays. Indeed it was very strange: all around us hovered dark threatening clouds, yet on our Flower Mountain the sun was shining like a summer's day. Sabine, Andreas looked around worriedly, agreeing that a storm was brewing and that we should go down quickly. But no one listened to us, and in fact the weather remained dry until the end. When angels travel, they say, heaven smiles down upon them.

The children were overjoyed with their outing. Sweet drinks, slices of melon, peanuts and sunflower seeds were passed around, luxuries they only saw on these special occasions. Late in the afternoon they collected all the trash and the great family began the descent in a long snaking column, down to the valley and the Village.

These TADRA children really are very special, extraordinary beings. All of them will have suffered unimaginable pain in their younger years, and in the TADRA Village they are welcomed when they first arrive by other understanding, caring children who have had the same fate. They show new arrivals the way out of darkness and sorrow so that each of them can blossom like the beautiful flowers on this magnificent meadow. We have so much to learn from the TADRA children. They are part of a large, strong family in which everyone has his or her place and is fully accepted, however big, however strong, however gifted. Each of them helps according to his or her abilities and all of them are there for the others. Since all of them are treated the same, there is no jealousy or negative feelings, they all want the best for all of the others. Their daily life is marked by respect, harmony, love, decency and gratitude. Such solidarity brings with it an untold joy of living, which attracts the same in others.

Although that evening I fell into bed completely exhausted and drained, I would not have missed a moment of this valuable experience. On that day I experienced an unimaginable quantity of something that gave me strength and confidence in life. The TADRA children are my masters. Lovingly and with understanding, they show me the true, honest values of life, the ones that matter. They show me in their extraordinary way how I have often sought happiness in life in a completely wrong place.

News of the Infrastructure

A shower house for the children in Dawu

This year, Mrs Pema Drongshar from Switzerland has donated a large shower house for the children in Dawu. The building consists of two separate areas, one for girls and one for boys. Each has its own changing room and some fifteen showers. The new shower house is situated next to the water tower and the water is heated in a large boiler. This magnificent gift will doubtless greatly enhance the children's hygiene in the Children's Village of Dawu. The children are already very excited, and we express our heartfelt thanks!



The large shower house in Dawu will be operational in 2014.



Work on construction of the new sports grounds began in summer 2014.

New sports grounds in Golok

Qinghai Province has imposed a major catalog of requirements on its schools this year. Among other things, each school is required to build sports grounds. And so this summer we began construction of new sports grounds at the TADRA Village in Golok. The cost is estimated at some 20,000 Euros (24,000 CHF). We are still in search of a sponsor for this project.

Measures to improve water quality

In the Children's Village at Dawu flood water regularly invades our water system in the rainy season, leading to temporary pollution of the water. Under the direction of Claude Ramseier, an expert in hydraulics, we carried out various measures to control and improve the water quality this summer. Andreas Schulz (Germany), who visited both villages this summer, raised the level of our water collector by about a foot, and made a considerable number of repairs in both villages. The water was tested several times and the whole system cleaned out. Many thanks to Claude Ramseier and Andreas Schulz for their valuable support!



Andreas Schulz raising the level of the water collector in Dawu

Our Journey to the TADRA Villages

by Sabine Murcek and Andreas Schulz, Germany

Following on from 2007 and 2010, we had the opportunity this year to visit the Children's Villages for the third time. Our authorisations to visit both Villages were issued only a few days before our departure date, so that things were very jittery for us, as we had of course booked our flights and made all the other arrangements. But the good news finally came and we were able to make this so special trip.

This time our visit began in Golok, in other words we were wafted from sea level to 4000 metres in two days, with the result that we both had headaches. The situation in the Village had however markedly improved. Now, running water is available throughout the day, there is a hot shower and electric heaters in the rooms, making the stay considerably more comfortable for us spoiled Europeans. New too is the choice of a vegetarian meal at lunchtime, which is also delicious.

Each time you come into one of the Children's Villages, it is like a continuation of the last visit. But unfortunately in the four years that had elapsed since we were last there, it was almost impossible for us to recognise the children. Our time there coincided with a wonderful Children's Festival and we were able to spend many beautiful days with the children themselves.

Golok has become a huge city, every corner of which is undergoing new construction. The airport is planned to be in operation next year. The garbage situation, on the other hand, has not improved, and



Although the young nomad Kalwang Rigzen (17) has lived in the Tadra village at Dawu for eight years now, he has not forgotten how to ride a yak!

is still as deplorable as we found it at our first visit. The concept of nature conservation still has a long way to go here.

During our arrival by car we noticed that we were being "photographed" as we drove into each village and we had the impression that every vehicle was controlled. On enquiring we learned that it was actually a matter of speed checks. The roads have been much improved, but the driving habits of the local people still have to be seen to be believed.

Our journey to the lower Village this time involved a two-day trip with an overnight stay at Sertar, with a visit to the monastic town of Larung Gar and a sky burial site. A striking feature for us was the many nomad families and the yak herds with all their calves. Unbelievably, we hear that the nomadic life style is to be prohibited next year.

In the lower Village the climate is always rather more temperate and we were able to get more rest. We weren't allowed into the town, but this did not spoil our pleasure of being there. Here too we got to know a number of the children. The village makes a very orderly and cared-for impression. We were also pleased to see that there is now a dining room where meals can be taken communally in all weathers. There were no more flies this time, doubtless because the pigs had been removed elsewhere.

Andreas raised the level of the water collector so that flood water would not seep into the drinking water cistern. A bridge with an access road is being constructed near the Village, but there is unfortunately still a risk of encroaching flood waters.

The highlight of our stay in the lower Village was an excursion into the mountains. It was an incredible sight for us to see the children with the yaks. While we kept a respectable distance from the great herds, the children go to the yaks, call them, stroke them and seem to be simply accepted into the herd. Seeing Kalwang Rigzen riding a yak was a sight we will never forget.

We are always amazed at the extraordinary motor skills of these children. At the same time they have such a quality of patience that could teach us a lot. In neither of the two Villages did we ever see com-

plaining children. They have an amazing number of ideas of how to occupy themselves. The lower Village was actually on holiday, but the children went to school voluntarily each morning to practise their lessons.

The notion of time in the Villages is also quite different from our own. While of an evening we would be looking at the clock and thinking of going to bed, things there were often only warming up – an evening of dance or a competition. Hardly was the day out and all these ideas were brought out and put into effect: quite a challenge for us.



Sabine and Andreas with the entrepreneur couple from Shanghai at the Children's Festival in Golok, 2014.

It was very interesting for us to meet up with Chinese and Tibetan sponsors in both Villages. The shower house, drilling of ground water wells and acquisition of a small transport vehicle in the upper Village were all sponsored by a Shanghai entrepreneur, who for his part has also inspired some of his friends to support the Tadra project. Local and especially high-level support will always be a good thing for the Villages. We also met individuals who were friends of the project.

An important piece of news is that Beat has given up his job and now works on the Tadra project full time. His indefatigability is a major factor in the successful running of the Villages. We were able to observe how much commitment and love are being put into the project and its further development. Once again we have had a wonderfully rich experience, in both of the Villages. Beat was a very pleasant travel companion for us, and his technical and local knowledge hugely facilitated our journey and provided us with much background information.

We are so happy to have made this trip and look forward to visiting both Villages once again in the future.

Village News

Dawa Lhamo (8) undergoes a successful heart operation

In the summer of 2013 the Red Cross hospital in Xining carried out free health examinations at the TADRA Village in Golok. Dawa Lhamo (8) was found to have a heart defect that needed to be operated rapidly, and she had two operations in June of this year. The Red Cross hospital took over the costs of the operations, for which we are very grateful! Dawa Lhamo still needs one more operation, for on account of a malpositioning of her feet, the little girl cannot walk properly.



Village head Thupten Nyima took care of Dawa Lhamo at the



Thupten Nyima and Dawa Lhamo in July 2013

Vital statistics of the TADRA Villages

The TADRA Children's Villages are developing wonderfully. So far a total of 616 children have been taken in at one or other of the two Villages. Here are the precise figures including new arrivals in 2014:

	Dawu (seit 1995)	Golok (seit 2006)	Total
Children			
At present in the TADRA project	263	243	506
- In the Villages	185	243	428
- In higher boarding schools outside	78	0	78
<p>! To date, 74 TADRA children have successfully completed training and now stand on their own feet.</p>			
Personnel (incl. house mothers & teachers)	26	28	54
Infrastructure			
Orphanages (incl. youth house)	9	12	21
Primary school (grades 1 to 6)	1	1	17
Middle school (grades 7 to 9)	(external)	1	1
Handicraft school	(Golok)	1	1
Kosten TADRA-Projekt			
Total expenses, 2012 (excluding building costs), euros:	161'296.-	159'378.-	320'674.-



Thupten Gyamtso (6)

Without you, our dear sponsors, godmothers and godfathers, and friends of the TADRA project, the Children's Villages would not exist! And so in the name of all the TADRA children I wish to express here our enormous gratitude for your generosity! Everyone involved in the project works on a voluntary basis without exception, and we bear all our own costs (travel, expenses, etc.). The staff in Tibet receive the normal local salary. The project is financed exclusively by donations.

PESTALOZZI - GYMNASIUM IN UNNA

Seventeen years of support to the Tadra project and still going strong!



As early as 1997 we, the Tadra-AG (formerly UNESCO-AG) of the Pestalozzi High School in Unna, Germany, pledged our support for the orphan children of the Tadra project in Tibet.

Over the years we have been responsible for the construction of Unna House, a sports ground with sports equipment, the library in Dawu and a well equipped workshop in Golok. We also want to offer the children our support at the schools themselves, and for the last 17 years, so long as the political situation in Tibet allowed, we have visited the Villages. During these visits we put our energy into manual tasks, metalwork, carpentry and painting, or take care of the electric installation. We also spend a lot of time with the Tibetan children and learn more about their culture and tell them about our own. That is always the highpoint for all the travellers.

In this way a total of twenty teachers and almost two hundred students have visited the two Children's Villages on nine occasions. The Dawu school is also one of our official school sponsorships. In addition, five former girl students of the school have spent long periods in the Villages, mainly to teach English. We are now greatly looking forward to the next Tibet journey, planned for the fall of 2015. For organisational and political reasons we were unfortunately unable to undertake the planned visit this fall.

To make all this possible, over the past seventeen years we have continually undertaken a number of actions to bring in donations and we will happily continue to do so in the future. Our present activities include a weekly sale at the school, catering for important school events, the organisation of sponsored events for the Tadra project, stalls at

the Christmas markets in Holzwickede and Unna. Last but by no means least, we have attracted some 120 sponsors to the Tadra project. Very close to our hearts is the creation and sale of our Tibet calendar, which will soon see its sixteenth edition.

We hope to keep up these activities in the coming years, despite the fact that Mr Bergemann, the initiator, has now retired. He has been succeeded in the leadership of the group by Mrs Schaper and Mrs Guske, whose task it will be to convince many new young colleagues and the new school management of the value of our work and to enlist their active support.

We of the Tadra-AG cannot stress to greatly that we are involved in a serious social project that requires a constant effort and commitment. The active support of a large number of members of all ages has sustained the project successfully over all these years.

Our heartfelt desire is to continue to work together for the well-being of the children of the Villages. Only by working together can we achieve such results. And only together will it be possible to continue our work in the same measure in the future and so support the children.

Your Tadra-AG of the Pestalozzi High School, Unna



For information on our work:
To see a thousand photos from Tibet:
Travel information to Tibet:

www.unna-tadra.de
www.silkroad-üics.com
www.silkroad-travels.com

Our most heartfelt thanks to your support



Dawu 2014

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You can help the Tadra project by purchasing a TRINKHOR CD

TRINKHOR V CD + DVD

The new music album and Trinkhor V DVD is now available! Since its release in August 2014 sales and donations have brought in some 30,000 euros for the Tadra project. We would be happy if you were to further support the project by buying a music CD or a DVD. Some of the songs were recorded with a very well-known Tibetan artist in a good studio in Germany and are of high quality. All proceeds of course go to the Tadra project!

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