

# Education in Upper Dolpo

## „GIVE CHILDREN A FUTURE“



HUMAN  
STIFTUNG

in cooperation with



In February 2016, the founders of the ‚**HUMAN Foundation**‘ and the ‚**Dolpo Tulku Charitable Foundation**‘ (DTCF) signed a cooperation agreement with the aim of strengthening education in the Dolpo region of Nepal.

This resulted in school projects in currently three villages in Upper Dolpo. The villages are at an altitude of 3,800-4,100 m. In order to understand the necessity and the challenge, it is important to know the environment in which this project is taking place, which fits perfectly with the vision of the HUMAN Foundation: ‚**Give children a future**‘

Until the 18th century, the Dolpo region belonged to western Tibetan royal and dynasties. Up until 1993, **Upper Dolpo was a restricted area** and has only been visited by foreigners since then. With 8,000 km<sup>2</sup>, the Dolpo is the largest of the 77 districts in Nepal with 36,000 inhabitants and borders on Tibet in the north. About 8,000 residents live in Upper Dolpo. They are called Dolpa-Pa.

**All the villages in Upper Dolpo are above 3,500 meters altitude and can be reached on foot in 8-10 days from Juphal.**

Besides Humla, the Dolpo is the only district in Nepal without proper roads and road connections. To get to the Upper Dolpo, you have to overcome 5,000 meter high passes. It is one of the most remote populated mountain regions in the world and is known for its wildness and solitude. There is only sporadically a telephone connection and

hardly any internet connection. Electric power is only available for light via small solar systems. Dunai in Lower Dolpo is the seat of the district administration and has about 3,000 inhabitants.

Due to the high passes, the residents of Upper Dolpo **are cut off from the outside world for weeks in winter**. The climate is dry with sparse vegetation. This also means that **drinking water is getting scarce in some villages, which could become a serious problem in the future due to climate change**. The rivers are frozen in winter, water sources are often far away.

Many see the Upper Dolpo **as the real preserver of the core Tibetan culture** as the Chinese government seeks to destroy Buddhism and Tibetan culture in Tibet.

Let yourself be enchanted by the wonderful landscape, the people and the culture.



## Life in Upper Dolpo

In the foreground of the life of the residents in the Upper Dolpo, the Dolpa-Pa, are **the securing of livelihoods** as well as religion and culture. There are few income opportunities, which are briefly outlined here:

**Agriculture:** Cultivation primarily serves to secure one's own food supply. Depending on the location, potatoes, corn, wheat, millet, cabbage, radishes, Tibetan barley and local crops are grown. Farming is vital to have enough food over the long winter.

However, the harvest is not sufficient to fully cover the food requirements. Cultivation is done by hand, yaks and sometimes horses are only used for plowing.



**Keeping goats and sheep** is an important source of income. However, children are often used to look after the animals, who then miss school. The animals are moved to other areas during the growing season and in the winter because they either destroy the crops or cannot find food.

By selling animals and making goods from wool and leather, money can be earned and important trade can be carried out.

Salt, tea, lentils, sugar and other goods are needed. The borders to Tibet are only open for a short time a year.

The borders were closed during the pandemic. A big problem for the Dolpa-Pa.



Another source of money is the medicinal mushroom Yartsa Gunbu, translated as summer grass and winter worm. It lives on moth larvae, from which only a small piece of grass comes out of the

ground in summer and grows in the highlands of the Himalayas. The fungus is particularly popular in Asia. For a fungus you can get 10-15€. Families often go on the Yartsa Gunbu search together. The schools are then closed for two weeks.

**Further sources of income are opened up by professions** that are in demand in the Dolpo. These are apprenticeships in the villages, in the medical field or manual craft.



**Life in Upper Dolpo is very hard and burdensome**, especially during the winter time. In order to heat the oven to prepare food every day, lots of dung and wood must be collected throughout the year.

In winter, the villagers often meet in small, cold rooms in their very simple houses to talk, do handicrafts together and pray. We get solar lamps to at least "bring some light into the darkness".



**A lot has changed in recent years.** The government **built "roads"**. On our tour we saw paths that were partially buried again due to rain due to lack of reinforcement.

**Opinions are divided among the villagers.** The younger generation thinks this is a good thing, because it is possible to cover faster distances on a motorcycle.

It is also hoped that the transport of goods will become cheaper. But there are also critical voices, because many activities in the transport sector with mules, horses and yaks are in danger of being eliminated. **Tourism could also change drastically.**



## School Projects

### Winterschool in Saldang



Samye Choeling Gumpa in Saldang

The **school in Saldang at 4,050 meters** has existed since 1999 and was set up by **Karma Dhondup** with the great support of the Friends of Nepal. The school coordinator **Pema Wangyal** and his team of teachers give their lessons with great commitment at the school. As in all mountain regions of Nepal, this school would not exist without foreign support.



Karma Dhondup Lama



Pema Wangyal Lama

**Since 2016 we have been financing the attendance of 60-70 children at the winter school:** salaries for teachers, kitchen staff, food, school materials, expenses such as transport costs.

**Annual operating costs:** 8.000 Euro.

Some families leave the region in winter, so the number of students is reduced during this time. There is a formal compulsory education of 5 years, but no control over it.

The winters in Upper Dolpo are very cold and life in the villages is extremely hard. People are cut off from the lower regions for months.



**70% of the residents remain in the village over the winter**, 30% go to lower areas with their yaks or try to find work.

The yaks are only allowed to return to the village after the fall harvest, as they would destroy the seed. With the yaks comes heating material, such as collected wood, which is used for winter times along with dung and local scrub.

Sending a letter by post to Upper Dolpo is not possible.



**There are also changes in Saldang.**

The school building is extended up to the 8th grade and a small „clinic“ is built to improve medical care.

Political decentralization gives local authorities more powers.



### Winterschool in Nyisal

If you hike 7-8 hours north from Saldang along the Nagaon River towards Tibet, you will come to the village of Nyisal on the right.

**Since the winter of 2019**, up to 40 pupils have been able to attend the newly established **winter school in Nyisal**.

The general conditions for the school and the life of the people in Nyisal are even more difficult than in the village and the school in Saldang. Nyisal is 3,800 meters above sea level.

**Annual operating costs:** 3.000 Euro.

2-3 teachers teach at the winter school in Nyisal. An assistant prepares the food. **The teaching scheme in Nyisal is congruent with Saldang:** repetition of the subject matter of the summer school and

intensification of Tibetan traditions.

At the end of the winter period, **an exam is held where what children have learned** so that they can start well prepared the regular summer school, starting in April.



Pemma Tsering Gurung

Regular discussions with **Pemma Tsering Gurung as head of the school committee** help to clarify the needs and necessary changes as well as the annual need for support. It is not always easy to recruit teachers for this work during the harsh winter. The recognition for the people for whom education in these mountain villages is personally important is all the greater.

**We want to ongoing financially ensure the operation of the winter school in Nyisal.**



## School in Lhuri

**We have been supporting the Shree Tripitak Primary School** in Lhuri since 2021.

The village of Lhuri (3,900m altitude), four hours from Nyisal, with the neighboring villages of Kiwa and Sungjer is the target group. The school in Lhuri was the central and most accessible place for the children from these villages. **The school was closed during the civil war in Nepal (1999-2006)** and has not reopened.

The old school building was in a very dilapidated condition and not a safe environment for



Old school in Lhuri



Dawa Phuntsok

children's education.

**Before schools reopened**, children had to either go to school in the next village, which takes a day, or stay at home to help their parents.

Dawa Phuntsok, who grew up in Lhuri, had a vision to get the school up and running again. As a teacher, he recognized the problems when children do not have access to education. But the rotten infrastructure and poor school conditions affect student performance and learning.

In 2021/2022, just over 20 students attended the school. Since the children have not had any regular lessons up to now, there has not been any class assignment. **Due to the lack of a school building, lessons often take place outdoors.**

In 2021 we decided to construct a new school building and to finance the running of the school.



Sketch Lhuri (Architectural office Ursula Schmid, Munich)

In the summer of 2023, the first classrooms will be ready for teaching. Then the school children can also be divided into classes. **With each additional school year, the next higher class is started**, so that class 5 can be put into operation in 2026. **We will employ up to seven teachers in total.**

The school children and the villagers are extremely happy that a school will be built and that regular classes will take place.



In the long term, an increasing number of students is to be expected, since the children from Sungjer and Kiwa, who rest at school due to the long way home, are also being taught. The school runs from April to October.



**It is planned to build 12 rooms by 2024:** 7 classrooms, two bedrooms, a kitchen, an office and a larger room as a multi-purpose or training room.

The HUMAN Foundation has agreed to ensure the operation of the school for at least the next 20 years.

**Estimated construction:** up to 80.000 Euro.

**Annual operation cost:** up to 20.000 Euro.



The rapid implementation is made possible primarily by generous donations from Gaby and Matthias Wahl to the HUMAN Foundation.

**The school is built in memory of her late son Alexander** (picture).

Alexander was fascinated by the people and culture of Tibet and Nepal. Through this work we will forever remember him.

We run the school together and give the children a future through education.

## Emergency Aid Projects

Depending on the need and effectiveness, we also support other projects. **We provided financial support during the earthquake in 2015 and also during the pandemic in 2021.** Together with our partner, the DTCF and other NGOs, 755 families in Upper Dolpo were



Project Food Support during Covid-Pandemic

provided with food. Due to Covid-19, the living conditions for the needy people in Nepal have also deteriorated. Humanitarian support for people in poverty and need is the basis of our work.

One project at the end of 2022 was to provide three villages with **food, blankets and tarpaulins in Mugu district after landslides.** Many people died and many houses were destroyed. We have helped almost 300 families.



**And yet another type of project:** we bought modern tools for three carpenters. In the meantime, a lot has been made with it: furniture, windows and doors. You taught everything themselves.

With a manageable sum of money we got three people work and bread.



Meet with Carpenters in Saldang



Produced furnitures

## Summary

The HUMAN Foundation completely finances the operation of the two winter schools: the teachers and the kitchen staff, the daily meal as well as some learning materials. **All costs are covered for the school in Lhuri:** construction and maintenance of 12 rooms as well as all running costs of the school.



### What does our project do for the children and the people in the Dolpo region?

The children learn **to read, write and math**, as well as the Tibetan, Nepalese and partly English language.

The children receive a **general education** and a deeper understanding of Tibetan culture, have a choice of how and where they want to spend their lives.

The young adults are able **to organize life in the village** and can **plan their agriculture more economically**. They learn **how to deal with money** and live a more conscious life. Women are becoming more confident in their decisions.

Children who go to school in their village from the start often return home later.

As young adults **they have a higher bond and social responsibility for families**, are more open to Tibetan culture.

We have the certainty that with the support of the schools in Upper Dolpo we are on the right track and that we are setting the right accents. Together with the teachers in the villages and our administrative partner DTCF, many children are able to lead a self-determined life. **But our emergency aid and other support projects** are also very gratefully received and carried out in a targeted manner.

There will be more changes in the coming years. We want to help you shape the future according to your needs.

**Our visits to the local villages encourage us in our actions and are unforgettable experiences.** Anyone who can spend several weeks in this indescribable mountain landscape with the Dolpa-Pa can count themselves very lucky and collect impressions that will last a lifetime.



**Many thanks to all donors. Our success is your success!**

**Edith and Karlheinz Neumann** founded the non-profit HUMAN Foundation in 2014 to support poor and needy people, especially children.

‘GIVE CHILDREN A FUTURE’ is our vision.

100% of the donations flow into the projects.

[www.human-stiftung.org](http://www.human-stiftung.org)

Our administrative partner in Nepal is the Dolpo Tulku Charitable Foundation (DTCF), founded by **Dolpo Tulku Rinpoche**.

The aim of the DTCF is to support the people in the Dolpo region in all aspects of their lives, be it in the area of education, medicine or the improvement of livelihoods.

[www.dolpotulku.org](http://www.dolpotulku.org)

