



Fondazione Amici-di-Qinghai

Report on the activities in CY 2024

Thanks to noticeable easing of the coronavirus-related travel restrictions, the *Amici-di-Qinghai* were 2024 able to resume their activities in *Qinghai* smoothly and in full. Erwin visited the plateau twice. The visit in April allowed him to review a renovation project on site, and the trip in November gave him the opportunity to review the project of another nomadic moving school with the authorities and village elders. He was also able to personally hand over the financial aid to some of the pupils and discuss its use with their parents. Most parents concerned are all owning a more or less large number of yaks, goats and/or sheep, but do not have cash, unless they are selling animals to traders. Mr. Song, the loyal office assistant in Beijing, personally handed over most of the 210 scholarships to the selected students during his separate visit. - The on-site discussions provided welcome opportunities to update the digital contact, which was also intensively maintained during Covid: the central authorities had provided all adults on the plateau and all students with a 5G mobile phone free of charge, “in order to enable the local authorities to optimally *administer* the population of the vast highlands”. Finally, the interviews confirmed that parents and students alike have retained their traditional, natural “*joie de vivre*” and sociability; the flexible attitude of the local authorities in education, police and Party has likely contributed to this appreciable development.

For the calendar year 2024, the following projects were proposed by the authorities at the beginning of the year and approved by the Board of Trustees at its spring meeting:

1. Renovating the DANGSHUN school building
2. Financing another nomadic traveling school, NASAIDANG
3. Implementing the annual scholarship program in ZEKU, QUMA, HUANQUHU,

The 2024 annual financial statements were once again prepared *pro bono* by Ms. Veronica Mannhart, CEO of Mannhart Management Co. Ltd. in Chiang Mai, as in previous years. The detailed audit was submitted digitally to the Board of Trustees for review in February. The latter is expected to hold an in-depth discussion and carry out a proper review and subsequent approval at its spring meeting. The annual financial statements will then be submitted to the external auditor, Mr. Cristiano BOTTA in Lugano, and finally forwarded to the supervisory authorities at the Department of Interiore EDI in Berne before the end of June.

As the lunar year of the WOODEN SNAKE has begun on January 29, we send you and your loved ones our very best wishes for optimum health, for all the happiness in the world, and last but not least, for deep peace in your hearts. As the wooden snake is considered being intelligent, enigmatic and cunning at the same time, we should perhaps be particularly careful in 2025, in order to navigate safely through the potentially turbulent waters in the foreseeable future.

With warm greetings and best wishes

Yours truly

Yolanda and Erwin Schurtenberger

Chiang Mai, mid-February 2025

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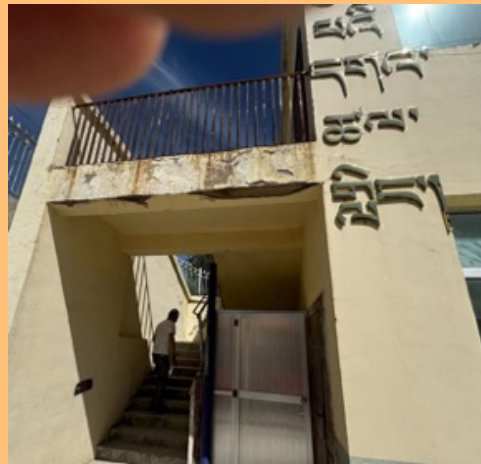
Supervisory Board: RA Lara Toma Pelucca, RA Rocco Bergonzoli, Monica Cocchi del Ponte, Maurizio Checchi,
Yolanda and Erwin Schurtenberger

1. Renovation of the DANGSHUN school building

The construction of the DANGSHUN elementary school in the Jianzha district was financed by the foundation in 2010. The extreme differences in temperature and humidity in the region, with very dry, extremely cold winters and very hot, humid summers, were increasingly taking their toll on the school building. However, as with Gabu in 2023, the local government was unfortunately unable to finance the renovation of the seriously damaged building. It asked, therefore, the foundation for help. After lengthy discussions about the costs of a solid, but not extravagant renovation, the Foundation Board finally agreed to cover the costs of the CHF 18,300 for the renovation.

Work began after the end of the 2023-24 school year, at the beginning of August. Thanks to the impressive efforts of the construction company, the work was completed at the end of September, so that lessons could resume in the renovated school building at the beginning of October. The *Amici* took part in the formal reopening ceremony on November 21, 2024.

BEFORE
renovation



AFTER
renovation

The *Amici's* expectations regarding the quality of the work were fully met.

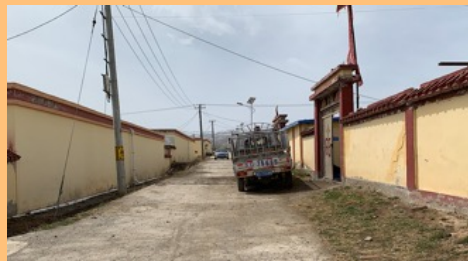
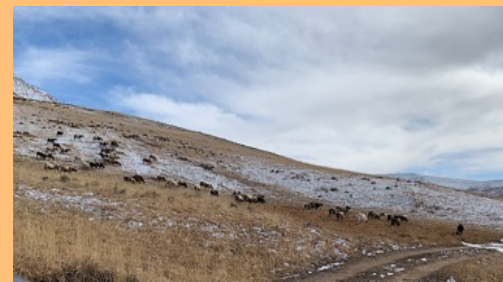
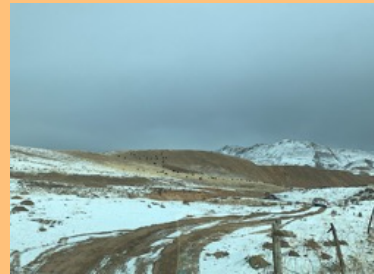


2. Financing the *NaSaiDang* nomad school

The *NaSaiDang* moving nomad school is located in *Maixiu* County, in a region that is extremely sparsely populated, at an average altitude of 3500 meters above sea level and has a population of 2356 people. The area of this new moving nomad school is extremely vast and known for very harsh winter months ranging from minus 20°C to minus 35°C. - The actual village has a boarding school, where 64 pupils are permanently taught at all primary school levels and 43 pupils are periodically taught at pre-school level.

Lessons for the 43 pre-school pupils take place 10 days a month in the village school and 20 days a month at two teaching locations, as agreed with the nomads, namely in *Jisantang* for 24 pupils and in *Eyaotang* for 19 pupils. The two teaching locations are 6 and 15 km away from the actual village of *NaSaiDang*. The roving instructor is teaching 2-3 days per week at each of the two teaching locations, which are not far from the homes of the parents concerned. The combination of 10 days at the village school and 20 days at the teaching location makes it a little easier for the very young nomadic pupils to get slowly accustomed to a life without the daily care by their parents. At the end of their primary school classes one to four, they have all to attend a compulsory instruction at a boarding school in a small town.

The journey from the prefectural capital *Tongren* via the district town of *Zeku* to the village of *NaSaiDang* took four hours and led through magnificent winter landscapes



The pupils of the two pre-school classes attend lessons at the actual village school for 10 days a month.



As mentioned earlier, lessons for the 43 pre-school pupils alternate between 10 days a month at the village school and 20 days at two teaching locations, namely *Jisantang* and *Eyaotang*. The *Amici* spent the afternoon of November 22, 2024 in *Jisantang*, after an hour-long drive on a snow-covered natural road. To celebrate the visit of the *Amici*, the authorities had transported the students from the second site (*Eyaotang*) to *Jisantang* as well. All students from the pre-school were therefore able to celebrate the festival in honor of the *Amici* from Switzerland. The traditionally quite withdrawn young nomads and their parents were visibly moved by the happy event in expressing emotionally their gratitude to the foundation.



3. Implementation of the extended scholarship program

In the school year September 2023 to June 2024, a total of 210 scholarships were awarded to needy nomadic students, most of them on the *Zeku* plateau (120), the others to scholarship holders from the *Huanquhu* high mountain school (30), as well as at the village schools *Quma* (10), *Jicang* (25) and *Duohemo* (Eros Bergonzoli School). According to the traditional procedure, at the beginning of the year the authorities contact all underprivileged parents of nomadic pupils by text message on their cell phones and ask them to apply for a scholarship if they wish. The authorities then check the material circumstances of the parents and in March publish the list of selected candidates on the information board of all teaching locations. If no one objects to the selection, the Education Office then submits the list to the *Amici* with a request for review and requests for changes or approval. The Supervisory Board of the Foundation discusses the list at its spring meeting and approves the transfer of the relevant amount to the *China Agricultural Bank* for the benefit of the *Zeku Education Bureau*.

ZEKU

120 scholarships of RMB 1,200 each were distributed to pupils in a total of 14 nomadic schools. On two occasions in September, the *Amici* were connected via *WeChat*, which allowed them to exchange a few words with the scholarship holders. The 120 scholarships were given exclusively to children of nomads who have no regular income. The parents concerned usually own only goats, sheep and yaks, i.e. they have no regular cash income unless they sell animals. The scholarship recipients are confirming receipt with their fingerprints. The money is traditionally managed by the parents or the responsible teacher, with the possibility of the Foundation to inspect the accounts. The funding of the entire scholarship program on the plateau for the 2024-25 school year was generously paid for by a charitable foundation that knows the educational system on the plateau of *Zeku* with its peculiarities, but wishes to remain anonymous.

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The pupils confirmed receipt of the scholarship with a fingerprint.

The money is administered either by the responsible teacher or the parents.



QUMA

Quma village school: 10 students at RMB 1,500 each. Those scholarship holders who were not present in *Quma* when the scholarships were awarded, but were attending classes at a university or a college, were given the money to their parents.



HUANQUHU

At this high mountain school at 3800 meters above sea level, 30 scholarships of RMB 1200 each were handed out. For the handover, the scholarship recipients were transported by truck from Huanquhu down to the village school in *Quma*, where they were able to receive the money.



JICANG

28 scholarships were distributed at the mountain village school *Jicang*: thirteen scholarships to primary school pupils at RMB 500 each, seven to middle school pupils at RMB 1000 each and eight to university students at RMB 1500 each.



DUOHEMO 2

25 scholarships have been awarded at this school, which was founded in honor of the unforgettable friend and Foundation board member RA Eros Bergonzoli: seventeen scholarships of RMB 1000 each to pupils in the first and second primary classes and eight scholarships of RMB 1200 each to pupils in the third and fourth primary classes.

