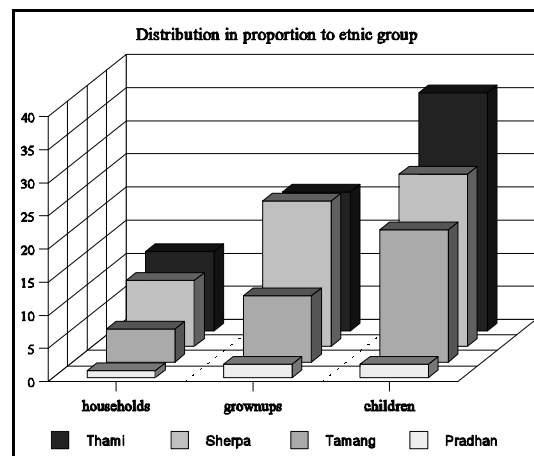


# HIMALAYAN SCHOOL PROJECT PRIMARY SCHOOL CHHUMBU SOLU-KHUMBU NEPAL

## A Danish-Nepali Schoolproject in Chhumbu, Solu-Khumbu District

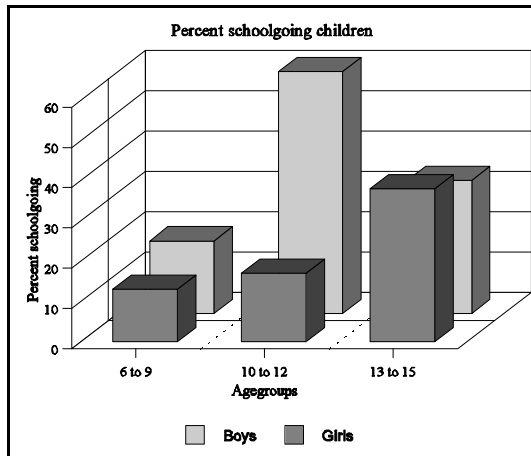
Chhumbu is a little village in the north-east part of Nepal. Well, village? or rather scattered houses on the fertile south-west hillside of Lamjura Danda in Solu, Solu-Khumbu District. The district is well-known among people, who have been trekking in Nepal. The second most visited trekking-route in Nepal leads to Mount Everest in Khumbu in 14 days, and it starts from the end of the main road in Jiri. On the third day of the trek the route leads through Chhumbu on the way up the Lamjura-ridge towards the pass of Lamjura. Solu-Khumbu District is well-known as the native country of the Sherpa-people. The Sherpagroup is the ethnic minority, who has been in closest contact with western trekkers for a long time. They have a bright look on life and a jolly attitude to all difficulties, and they make easily friendship. Chhumbu is situated in the south-west border of Solu, which includes other groups of people, like the Tamang-people, who like the Sherpas have immigrate the area during the last centuries. The Sherpas come from the Tibetan highland and the Tamang's originally come from the central area around the burmese-tibetan border. But the largest group of people in the area are the Thami's, who is the originally population there. They are forced out several places and almost wiped out of presumptuous immigrants; but in Lamjura Danda the people have during years been coming to terms with each other. Even though they could not dream of having marriages among the different ethnic groups, they accept each other and treat each other respectfully. Exactly here in Chhumbu exists mutual good feelings among the groups, which everybody notices, who relaxes with a cup of tea in one of the little tea-houses along the road. Maybe you can like someone, if the person is a good neighbour! But under all circumstances people get along with each other. The Sherpas are the jolly and active "sons of nature", who travel far around for adventures and to obtain fortune; the Thamang's rather want to stay home and cultivate the fields. The Thami's are people of low caste, who traditionally have been working for the two other groups; usually they are poor and not landowners. They are shy and reserved, and they have no tradition for education, but comparing themselves to the Sherpas, and their eagerness to have their children educated, the Thami's want to give their children a better future too, and among other things educating the children. Especially the Sherpas feel that they are indebted to the Thami's, and many stories from the village tell, that Sherpas had given land to their former farm worker by will. In this village, Chhumbu, exists a common wish for social and human



Figur 1

equality.

Chhumbu is placed on the slope 600 m above the valley floor, where the bigger village, Kenja, is placed. This village are inhabited of the Chhetri's, and a single family of lower cast of these, Pradhan, have built a house on the slope. The Chhetri's are the majority of the Nepali people, and they are hindu's; the Sherpas are active Buddhists. The Tamang's and the Thami's like to choose the same religion as their neighbours, so on this slope they are Buddhists too. Further up 400 m along the path are the buildings of Sete, whose inhabitants are Sherpas and Thami's. On the north-west slope of Lamjura-ridge is the village of Sagar-Baganche placed, which is a larger village inhabited almost solely by Sherpas. Here lies the only gompa of the whole area, which of course is a Buddhist gompa.

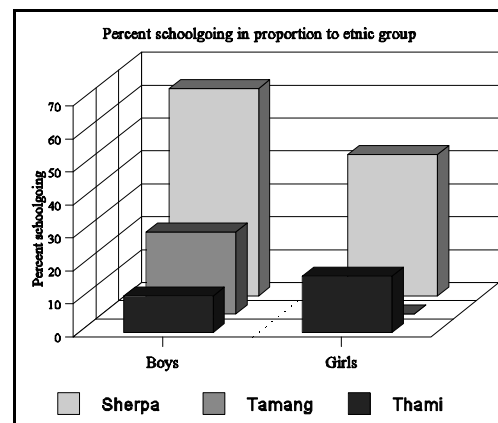


Figur 2

In Kenja there are both a Primary School and a Secondary School. Both schools are solid and well-functioned. But from Chhumbu there is a steep path 1-1½ hours to the school, and 2-2½ hours from school back to home. No children from Chhumbu like to go in school there. In Sete is a little Primary School with a long school way too. It is an insufficient school with only one lazy and underpaid teacher, who rather want to look after his land and his alcohol, than after the children, whom he often beats. So this is still not the right school for the Chhumbu - children. In Sagar-Baganje is a well-functioning Primary School, and the citizens there are preparing a Secondary School. This school project is sponsored by Edmund Hillary's Himalayan

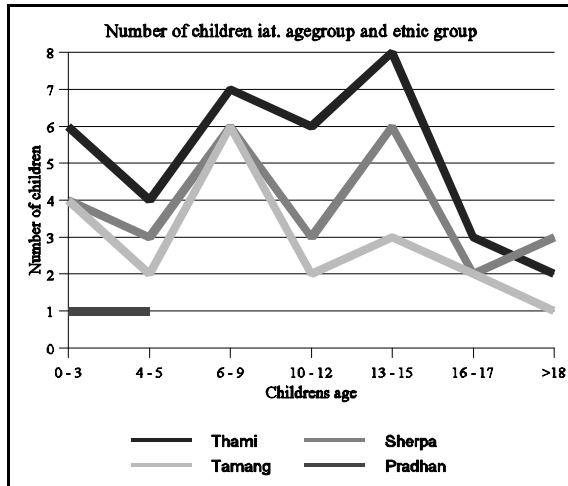
Trust, who has conducted a very comprehensive building of schools in the whole highland of Solu-Khumbu. The school-road is 200-300 m up the hill, round the ridge along a dangerous path. It takes 1½-2½ hours to come to school there, and 1½ hours to return to home. But still 13 children of Chhumbu's all 47 children in the age of 6-15 years go to school in Sagar-Baganche. But their parents admit, that the long school-way, and the need of help from the children, cause many truancy-days. Therefore it is only the big and strong children in Chhumbu, who have the chance of going to school. That is the boys of 10-12 age, whom the parents dare to send away; but the girls are elder, about 13-15 years, before their parents dare to send them to the distant school. On the other hand there is a need of the boys of 13-15 years for working home on the farms, so they often quit school after a couple of years. Actually there is no time for using 3-4 hours on the school way besides the 6 hours in school. Traditionally it is a better investment to send boys in school than the girls. The girls are "only going to be married and have kids". But the people in Chhumbu deny, that they are thinking this way; because a well-educated mother want to stimulate her children for education.

There is a tendency, that the more well-to-do Sherpas are sending their children to school on the contrary to the more poor Tamang's and Thami's. It is because of the Sherpa-parents, who are not so dependent on help at home from their children, because they can afford buying working capacity - especially from the Thami's.



Figur 3

As it appears from Figure 1, the Sherpas have control of family planning, and they do not have so many children as the Tamang's and the Thami's. The bigger family the more poverty, of course. On the other hand, you can more easily exempt a couple of children for school, if you have many children. All parents in Chhumbu have promised, that if the school-way can be reduced to half an hour both ways, they are willing to send all their children in school. Other causes for not sending children to school were bad experiences with incapable teachers.



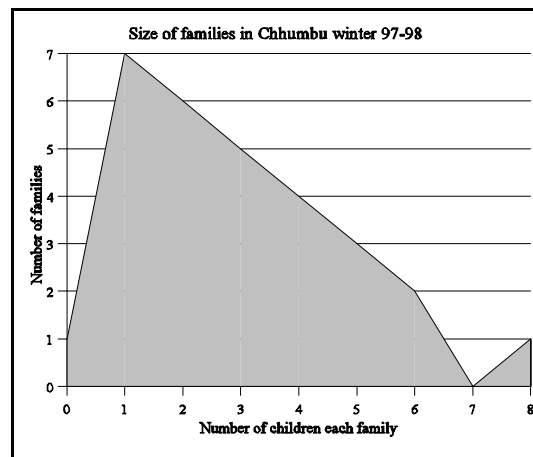
Figur 4

Because of the need of teachers in Nepal, many Nepali's from the lowland get a course in half a year, and after that they are supposed to be stationed as teachers for 2-3 years in a highland schools far from home. This is not giving the grounds for good teaching. As smaller group of teachers are well educated for 2-3 years with English language among other things. Those teachers are getting higher wages, and sometimes even come from the highland themselves. So these English Medium Teachers are much more educated and motivated. Unfortunately Sagar-Baganche Primary school is not an English Medium School, so many parents feel that the efforts for going in school are bigger than the results. Hopefully the Secondary School will get

started and then draw better teachers to this region. In Sagar-Baganche they have built a house for 3 teachers all in 40m<sup>2</sup>, which according to Nepali standards is attractive for teachers because they otherwise have to live in houses of accidental people.

Two families have a house in the Chhumbu, but they do not live there permanently. One of them normally lives in Katmandu because of husbands work; but his wife and child will probably move to Chhumbu, if a good school will get started. The other family have their main residence further down in the valley, because of the school there. They will probably move to Chhumbu too. Two families have foster-children who live with different families. They will hardly go in any permanent school.

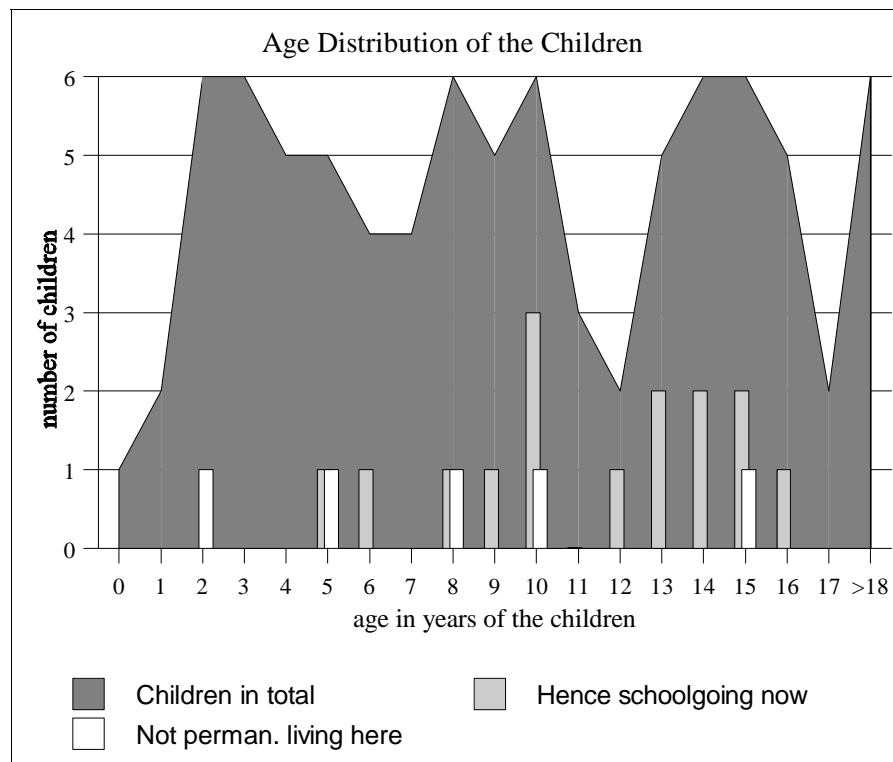
Why built a school here where the distance to other schools is not quite unreasonable? You can easily find other places in Nepal, where the need is bigger. But we happened to be there a day when a good conversation took place about the village and its future. There was also talking about a power station, home-industries, cattle improvement and family planning. Well, it was not quite accidentally, because our good friend Dachhiring Sherpa comes from here and that is why we were staying here a couple of days and had a feast.



Figur 5

If one looks in perspective on the school projects, Junbesi must be considered in the plans. It is a town placed on the other side of the Lamjura-pass, a day's march from here, and it is a fantastic place. The whole valley is in a wonderful development. First of all a religious foundation has been build up. Hundreds of Tibetan fugitives have established themselves in a big monastery society, actually the biggest Buddhist society outside Katmandu and Dharamsala in India. This has

supplied a lot of economy and strength to the town, which is in a progressive development. The whole Tibetan-dominated Solu-Khumbu is ruled by the district headquarter in the village of Salleri. But the people in Junbesi are working on making Junbesi a local district developing centre. The purpose is to improve Tibetan culture and intellectual life, which must be of interest to both Nepal and the rest of the world. One of the current initiatives is to extend Junbesi Primary and Secondary



Figur 6

School for first of all to draw the intelligent young Sherpas home instead of having them studying at the university in Katmandu, so that they can be used as high qualified teachers and developers in their home area. The staff of teachers are now on a level where they are going to start the next step of the process, to build a Highschool and in long terms a University.

But one of the problems in this plan is, that the development in the rest of Solu-Khumbu is not going so fast as in Junbesi. If the total development shall be improved, it is not enough to build a lot of small primary schools, because the teaching generally will be too insufficient. If it is possible to establish scattered, well-placed and well-functioned Secondary Schools surrounded by smaller well-functioned English Medium Primary Schools, the chance of giving the motivated and intelligent children a better education will be much bigger. With a Highschool in Junbesi there is no need to send children to Katmandu for further education.

Chhumbu Primary School would be a little part of a bigger project. A satellite to Sagar-Baganche Secondary School, which again could be a delivery school for Junbesi Highschool and University.

Actually education may be the only continued value that the western countries can give to the poor land of Nepal with its very difficult infrastructure. We, behind this project, are convinced, that the Sherpas would be able to influence their country in a positive direction. With their strong established Buddhist view of human nature they mean, that every human being has equal right and freedom to develop within its own limits and it is his duty to work for good and positive actions through life. Negative actions remote the effects of the good actions, and this will damage the soul. So in believing this the Sherpas have a high moral of society, which in our eyes will be a benefit for Nepal as a whole.

But why interfere in affairs of a foreign country? Well, surely the interference has given many negative effects in many respects and maybe has started an endless screw! For example what is going to happen with all the well educated young ones, if there is no other employment than the teaching of the next generation! Anyway the unemployed children will leave the village for bigger

towns.

Like this it is with all aid to developing countries, but you cannot stop development! Nepal is not only supposed to be a cultured national park where Westerners can spend their vacation. The Nepalese people want to take part in the material things like everybody else, and all parts of development demands education. So the best way of helping must be help to help themselves. Then we can hope that they can start other development programs by themselves out in their districts.

In November 1997 the first School Committee Meeting was held in Chhumbu with great enthusiasm and interest from the local people. They regretted their lack of economy in relation to such a big project as to establish and run a school; but everyone promised to be available with their working capacity, and promised to get all the materials such as stones and timber from the area. Dachhiring donated a piece of land for the school. A little crest on the slope in the upper outskirts of the village, that on the edge has an almost flat field with a view down over Chhumbu and to the wooded side valley under the holy mountain of Pike. The village people will prepare the schoolbuilding with digging, get some stones and cut some trees down, so they can dry. After that and when we have the whole amount for establishing the school and the amount has been send to Nepal, professional carpenters and bricklayers will be employed. The village people will still be helpers of course. If we have a sufficient amount we want to build a house for the teacher in the same time. Otherwise this has to wait.

After that we have to go on getting money for running the school. We hope to convince a stable donator, which we can trust the first 3-5 years until the Government of Nepal can be expected to take over some of the economic obligations for example in paying half of teachers salary. After these 3-5 years we hope being able to send a less amount regularly for many years. Maybe the parents will be able to pay school salary in the future. But totally economic independence is probably impossible.

If we get more money than needed for this project, we will start another school project somewhere else.