

A future school project in Junbesi

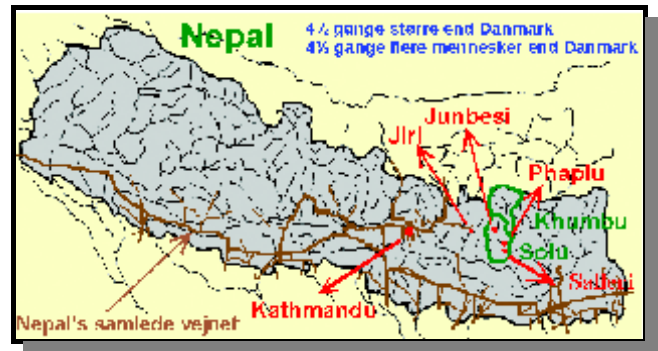
Upper Solu, Solu-Khumbu District, Nepal

Nepal is the small poor adventurous country, which is situated a quarter of the globe away from Europe, in between India and Tibet; but the heights are almost without limits. The northern part of the country is characterized by high peaks, deep valleys, based on a fragile material, which gives fertility, but also roads washed down as fast as they are built. People and goods are transported around on foot or a bit by small aeroplanes.

Solu-Khumbu is a district in the north-eastern part of Nepal. The main town of the district is **Salleri** in which the only bank and public offices is located. One hour away is a little airfield, **Phaplu**, with only one plane arriving and departing every second day.

In **Khumbu** is Mount Everest and many of the highest peaks on earth, and they have an attraction of many tourists. **Solu** is more dominated by mountains covered with forest.

Upper Solu is the northern and upper part of Solu. Here is the major ethnic group the Sherpas of Tibetan stock. Other ethnic groups are Tamang, Rai, Karma, Chhetri and Thami. Totally a population of 3.500, who lives in an old liberal minded society like Europe in the middle of the 1800 century, after the agricultural reform and just before the co-operative movement entered the scene.



Junbesi is the most important village in Upper Solu. Here lives 250 in the very village and 1.500 in the surrounding valleys. The valley is shaped like a half moon, and Junbesi means Moon Valley. Once the moon had frequent dates with the elves of the valley and left a mark of a half moon in several stones. This is a very idyllic and quite place. Several hostels in the village accommodate tourists in the seasons.

People, who wants to visit Junbesi, have to drive a hole day in bus from **Kathmandu** to **Jiri**. After that they have to walk for 3-5 days depending on their condition. Alternatively they can fly to **Phaplu** and then walk for 4-6 hours. Most merchandise are transported to the local market in **Salleri** via Jiri, and a smaller portion via the southern road. This transport is going on by porters and raise the price with ½-1 dollar per kilo.



Upper Solu is organised into 4 VDC 's, which again is divided into 9 Wards. According to schools the southern wards seeks towards Lower Solu. The eastern parts seeks towards Khumbu while the rest is regarding Junbesi School as the Central School of the area. With a suitable extension of Junbesi School it could be expected that all of them will seek towards Junbesi and even the neighbouring VDC's might do.

The school system in Upper Solu before and now

The first school in Solu-Khumbu was built in 1961. Nepal was an isolated and inaccessible country until 1949, where the aristocracy took the power from the king and allowed tourism. In 1953 Edmund Hillary climbed Mt. Everest, and since then he dedicated a part of his life to built schools for the people, who inhabited this area. He did build around 30 schools in Khumbu and Upper Solu in the sixties, and since then he has

primary school. But since by virtue of very energetic villagers, the school has extended step by step for money raised in the local society and from various donors. In 1971 there were 60 students in the school. In 1980 there were 200, and in 1992 the number was 350, of which 200 came from outside. That means the distance is more than 3 hours walk from Junbesi and they was forced to move to the village if they wanted to continue schooling.



supported the service of the schools. Now he is a very old man and is retiring after years of unique efforts.

The recent established school was built 1999 in Chhimbu by Rotary and Himalayan Project. This is a fine little 5-class school a day's walk from Junbesi. Chhimbu school is like most other small schools in Upper Solu, feeding school to the central Junbesi School. Depending on, of course, how far the children continue the schooling after leaving the local school.

The school in Junbesi was built in 1964, enlarged up to 7. class in 1972 and to 10. class in 1984. It was Hillary, who originally built the little

The school in Junbesi is stuck in between houses and have very little space, and for the outsiders there are limited possibilities living in the village. Because of the densely built up village the school cannot expand. The external students live by relatives, or help in the households or some just rent a room.

The School in 1994 bought five hectare of land in Chheding, twenty minutes walk from Junbesi, and got a prefabricated student hostel donated. This building was built in Schweiz and was transported by ship, truck, plane and at last carried by porters to Junbesi. Then it was reconstructed in 4 days in 1996. In 1997 another



house with rooms was built and a year later a house for teachers and a small 1kW hydro power station. In the year of 2000 a play ground for football was established. After that the intention was that Junbesi school step by step should move out there.

But then the Maoists became actors in the history of Nepal. Everything changed and many development projects stopped temporarily. But social projects supported by the local community, will not meet obstacles from any side.

Junbesi Higher Secondary Technical School

The common central school of the area, the Higher Secondary School for 6.-10. class should move out of the village. The old school can continue with the students from 1.-5. class. The them empty rooms can be used for other purposes. Other Danish NGO's are dreaming of adult education and Folk Highschool. The eldest classes can be removed out in the peaceful areas, where an academic atmosphere can be created in peaceful surroundings. Maybe the school can be extended up to 12. class. This part of the school is run by the Ministry of Education and will continue that way.



The student hostel should be upgraded and extended , so there will be sufficient room for external students. Many problems shall be considered. What kind of hostel should be established for poor students with less economic support from parents? A shared kitchen or a stove for each? Is one peon sufficient? The student hosteleexists, but has to be adjusted, so the young students wants to stay there, to give support for the economy. There should be a common hall. And what about a common kitchen which can feed those who want to pay. Anyhow it will be important in the future to charge the users.

Teacher's houses, guest house, wash and shower rooms and toilet buildings. Many teachers works only temporarily in the schools and many are only able to visit their family in holidays. Some wants to stay in a room in Junbesi. But for those who wants, the school should be able to provide a little house with a garden for the whole family. There should also be a guest house for external teachers for instance from Denmark. Of course so many people need sufficient of hygienic facilities. All facilities, which the school in future should be able to run in a sustainable way.

And then the innovation in the countryside in Nepal: Technical School. Not an institution where students can get a diploma education, but an institution where students can get vocational technical training. It could be workmanship, agriculture, nutrition, health, electricity, engineering or anything which could be needed or procured on location. The finances will probably be hardly manageable from the local area alone. From the beginning money have to be raised from external sources, but gradually the local society must take the burden. A technical school will attract students from far away and will sow a seed for the future employment locally, so the traffic towards the capital can be reduced.

The surrounding society will develop in relation to the new institution, and this will enhance when the new citizens starts to come in action. Upper Solu is an old traditional society, which is stagnate in habits and in lack of new thoughts. The clever youngsters are moving out. For the moment the young students are more tied up in daily life in Junbesi than in their studies and future. It could seem like a revolution to let 250 students get along in an "Academic City" the most of the day, and a great deal of them living together on location with a group of teachers. When this new generation jump into the society, there must be programs for them too. The cooperative movement started a development in Europe many years ago. The young people of those times, who had the teachings of the co-opera-tive ideas created a common understanding and got to know each other as partners instead of opponents. The same development could be stimulated in Upper Solu too, and may be it could spread out over the country.



The School Project in Junbesi

A project in many phases over many years where no new phase will be started before it is certain that all details are on place in the previous phase. It should also be done so, that by every phase the project can be terminated without losing everything.

PHASE 1: The Preparatory Phase is dealing with finding co-operators and partners, to evaluate their will, capacity, productivity and to test ideas and theories jointly.

PHASE 2: Development and Planning Phase is partly practical, where the school ground is measured and designed through different models, and partly theoretical where the dialogue brings partners to formulate the whole project. In this process all agreements must be established with all partners.

PHASE 3: The Piling and Development Phase where the school ground is developed by digging and secured by walls and terraces, burying electric and water supply, drain and water diversion and pavement of places, paths and stairs.

PHASE 4: Construction of Higher Secondary School with six class rooms, office, library, computer room and toilet facilities. Fitting out all rooms and initiation of education.

PHASE 5: Upgrading the Youth Hostel will happen gradually while the new school is built, and gradually as wishes and needs can be analysed. There will be established shower and washing facilities. Maybe an assembly hall and maybe several teacher's houses and a guesthouse will be built. Small gardens and sports facilities are ideas too.

PHASE 7: Building up Capacity of the local people is necessary in stead of others keeping the responsibilities. They must be helped to gain liability for the funding and responsibility for running the activities and the facilities. Besides the students should be helped further after graduation by starting small projects after the other.

The project is emanating on the experience and the local knowledge which developed from the time when Chhimbu Primary School were build and up to today. We don't know everything, but have met both difficulties and got positive experiences on which a major project can be based.

The project shall be organized and run by local capacities in Upper Solu.

They will be supported by the social NGO, Himalayan Community Development Organisation (HCDO). Most members of HCDO have their origin in Upper Solu, and are working mainly on developing their region. The keywords is education, employment, cooperative ideas, energy, forestry and sustainability.

www.nepalhelp.org

The Danish social NGO Himalayan Project (HP) is working closely together with HCDO. Their support will basically be on the broad foundation of social development in the area. HP has a wide network of contacts which can take on specific projects with know-how and financially.

www.nepalhelp.dk & www.nepal-dk.dk

Around these tree main players it will be possible for other organisations to take part in the project. If the project is carried out to the end it will be very big and with many isolated elements on the way, where groups of people and organisations can give more or less input and take more or less output.

**With best regards from
Himalayan Project, Denmark**

