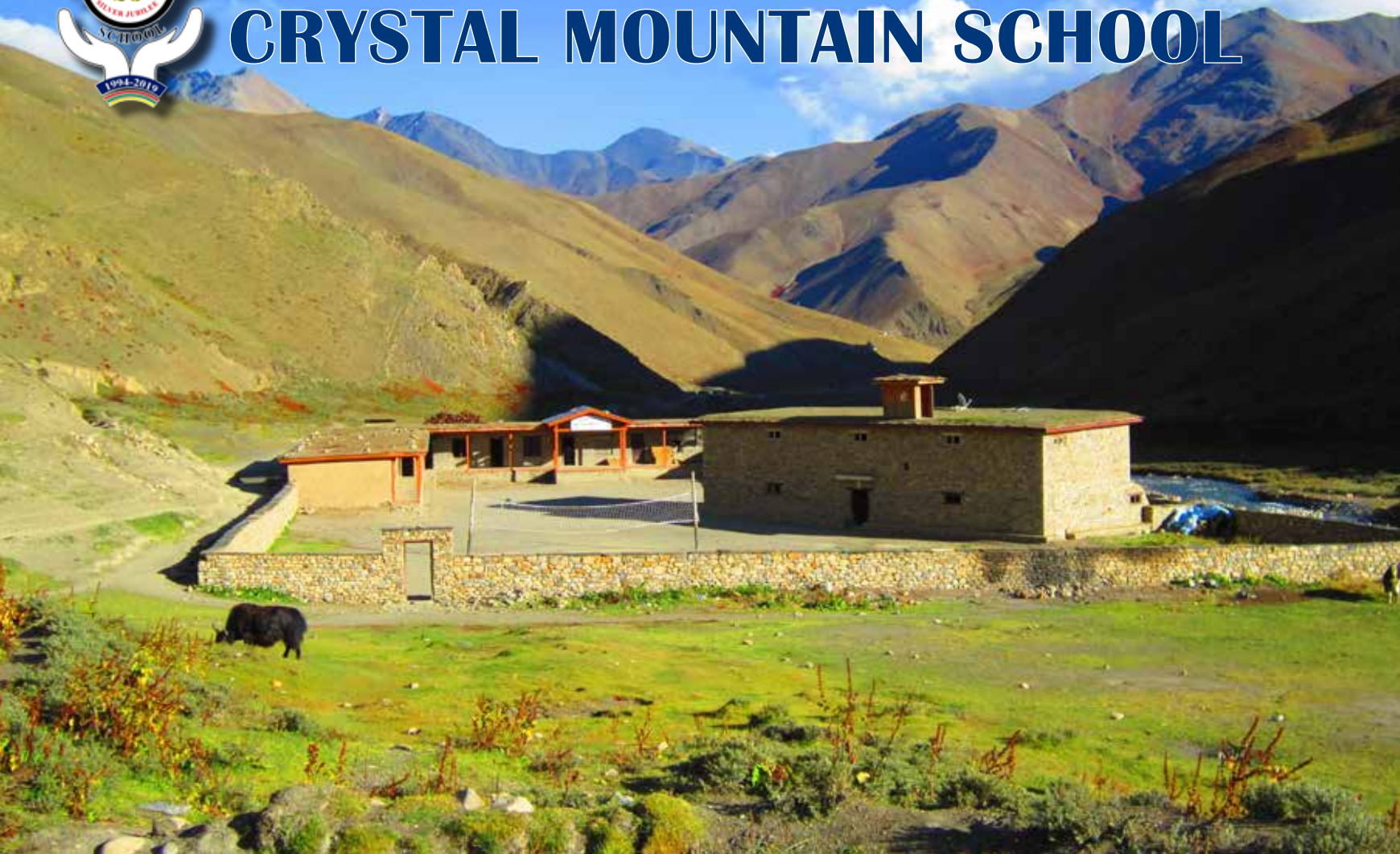
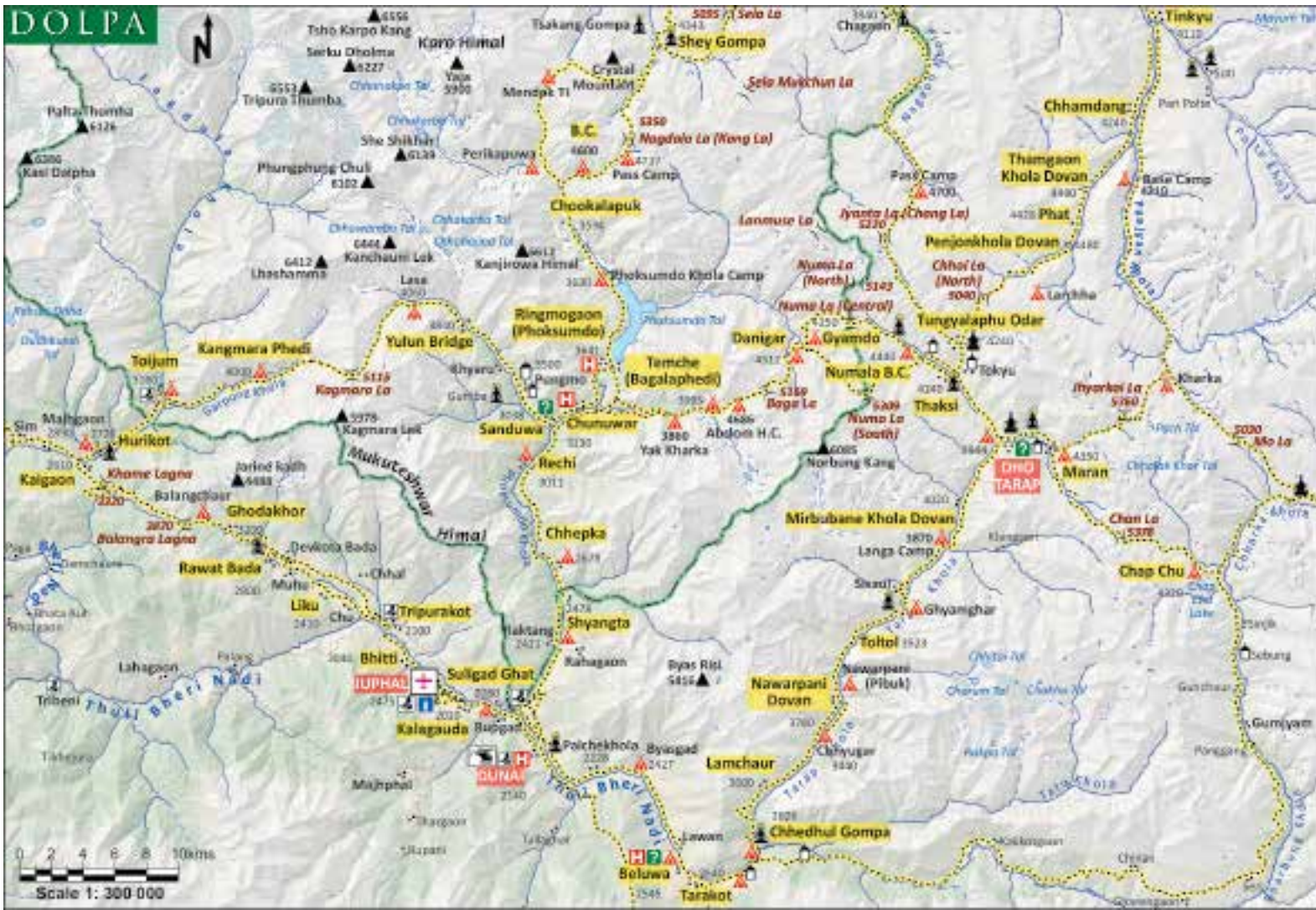




# 25 YEARS OF CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN SCHOOL



# DOLPA



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Scale 1: 300 000

# Forward

Our name is Action Dolpo, and we just celebrated 25 years of existence. That's already an admirable longevity for an organization in my category.

We were born on May 12th, 1993, in a rather wealthy country, but we have been working in Nepal, a country where life is often a matter of survival. The place where we've spent our time is in Dolpo, a remote region in the Himalayas, a massif that's unique in the world. We met extraordinary people who live such challenging lives. Often they have to demonstrate more courage in a day than we face in an entire lifetime.

It's with these people that we have held hands and walked together all these years.

Like a human body, we are one and at the same time multiple, formed as the body is by a multitude of cells which all converge to achieve common objectives.

What we've done is what all parents in the world do, and that is to rear, care and mould their children with the hope of giving them the best possible life with so much love and sensitivity. We've fed them and still feed them, so that they become fine young people. Our task has not been to give them food - well, perhaps partly! - but to nourish their spirits with what's called education and their culture.

We could have uprooted them and sent them to distant cities to register in local schools, but instead we preferred to keep them in their homes. Of course, since they stayed at home, they had to work with their parents, tend to the horses and livestock, but they remained free to roam the mountains like the little adventurous kids they were. Staying with their parents meant they could learn their way of life and values which are not taught at school, solidarity, a respectful and generous way of living with others, and *joie de vivre* unfazed by the extreme hardships of their existence.

We, Action Dolpo, founded the Crystal Mountain School, right in the middle of Dho Tarap Valley, so that the children who lived farthest can access there in no more than an hour. Over the years, we have added several buildings to house the classes, the teachers' rooms, the kitchen, the boarding house as more children keep coming who are avid to learn!

And when our children grew up, we had to resign ourselves to send them to Kathmandu to continue their studies. However, we found a solution as not to uprooting them totally from their Dolpo spirit: we rented a residence where they all live together as a family.

In Dolpo we didn't only educate them. We also brought care, not only of the children but of everyone else too. When we arrived, there was high infant and maternal mortality rate, as well as short life expectancy mostly due to treatable communicable diseases. We created a Health Post to complement the practice of traditional medicine by *Amchi*. Together we succeed in saving many lives. We continued to establish and initiate new programs to serve this exquisite place and people, but it would be too long to relate here ; they will be summarized in the retrospective which follows.

However, special mention should be made of the agricultural greenhouses built next to the people's homes, which have provided a source of vegetables at an altitude of 4,200 meters, where previously only barley and potatoes were grown. This has also saved fuels to stay warm in winter as people spend their daylight and late evenings in these green houses.

Today our eldest children have become adults. A number of them have returned to work in their community, some are married and have children.

Like parents who handover assets to their offspring, we have entrusted everything to them: the responsibility of the project and the funds needed to implement the programs. We would like to continue to support them for a long time because their being in that region is a perpetual challenge: survival in an inaccessible, high-altitude valley, in a remote area so far from many conveniences of modern life. They can't let go of our hand yet, they still need us, but we know that day will come. Onwards and upwards we go !

By Action Dolpo



# Acknowledgment:



Crystal Mountain School was the first formal school in the upper regions of Dolpo established by Action Dolpo France in collaboration with the Government of Nepal in 1994 AD. For nearly a decade, it was the only school to provide free education to children from Dho-Tarap and surrounding villages of Dolpo. The first cohorts produced stellar results in the district level exams, and excelled in higher education at schools in Kathmandu and abroad. In 25 years, 70 students have completed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) or Secondary Education Examination (SEE), 50 have completed or are doing 10+2 (high school), 10 Nursing, 5 Health Assistants(HA), 9 Bachelor of Arts (BA), 1 Bachelor of Law (LLB), and 2 Masters of Arts (MA).

Today, CMS alumni are working as teachers, nurses, health assistants, artists, elected community leaders, skilled laborers, as well as in various other capacities in both government and non-government sectors. Since 2012, the school has been run and managed by its own alumni. At a time when villages in neighboring districts such as Mustang are depopulating, education at CMS continue to attract large number of children and contributes to critical youth retention and community development in the region. The school has also rapidly expanded in its scale since its beginning, most notably through addition of four passive solar buildings in the past ten years. In addition to the regular seven-month school session, these passive solar buildings and the availability of local teachers have enabled the school to run additional three-month of winter classes since 2009. In addition to basic education, CMS has also been focusing on the preservation of Dolpo culture, tradition and language, and environmental and biodiversity conservation. The school was also a subject of various films and was covered in Nepali and French newspapers and magazines for its remarkable achievements. CMS inspired the establishment schools in other parts of Dolpo and serve as a model school in the region. We envision CMS as a center for the higher secondary education in Dolpo in the coming years.

To commemorate this long journey, we celebrate the Silver Jubilee of Crystal Mountain School this year. On this auspicious occasion, we express our deepest gratitude to the Founder of the school Ama Marie (Marie Claire Gentric), all the members of Action Dolpo, Kedar Sir (KedarBinod Pandey), and all the teachers of Crystal Mountain School. We also convey our kind gratitude to all sponsors and teachers of schools in other parts of Dolpo who are dedicated to providing education to Dolpo children.



# Introduction:

In December 1992, in the course of a three-month trip exploring the regions of Tibetan culture in western Nepal where Marie Claire GENTRIC, wandered for 62 days, even at winter's door, her feet led her to the ancient Tibetan enclave of Dolpo in Nepal. It was with a caravan of bearer-goats, then alone with Temba, that she arrived in the Tarap Valley, where she stayed until the snow threatened to block her there all winter.

She witnessed the extreme hardships of the inhabitants and yet was simultaneously captivated by their candor and their *joie de vivre*. On leaving, she promised to herself to return, but not empty-handed. There were no schools in Upper Dolpo, or rather there were phantom schools which exist only on paper.

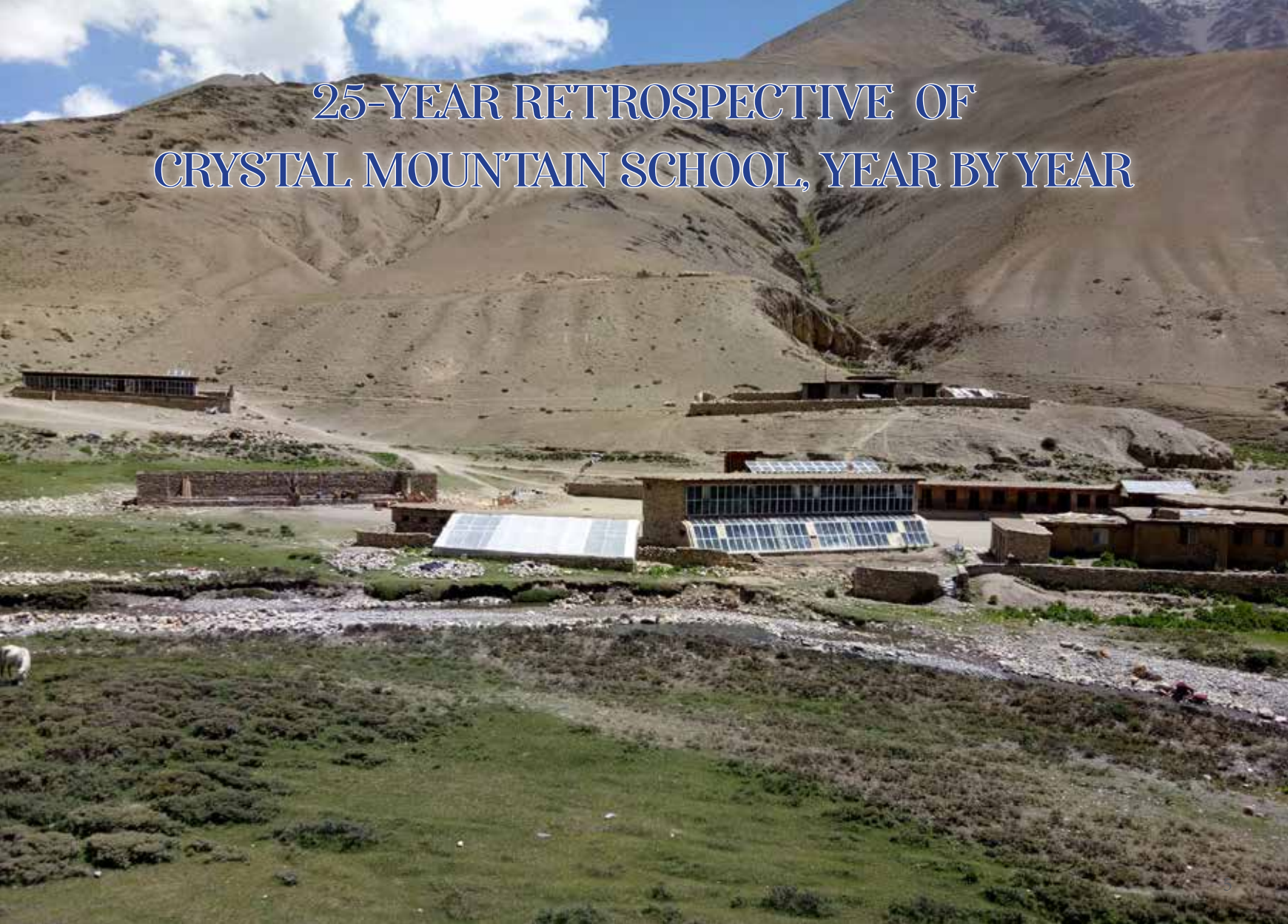
Back in France she launched a project for Dolpo and found the Action Dolpo association on May 12th, 1993. By luck the Île-de-France branch of the French Alpine Club offered to sponsor the association, which she gladly accepted. Then everything moved very quickly. Priority was given to education, the prerequisite for all the programs that followed : health, the economy, the environment, etc.

Kedar, a Nepali friend she met during this same trip, was enthusiastic about the idea and joined the project. He would be the first teacher at Crystal Mountain School. He accompanied Marie-Claire to Dolpo in December 1993 to propose the project to the inhabitants and compiled a register of the children to be schooled.

In France, thanks to the sponsorships of the children and a benefit concert of classical music offered by Frédérique and Renaud Fontarosa that same year, the first funds started to flow in. The Yellow Graphic Agency created the logo of the association and Crystal Mountain School free of charge and the school is ready to open the following year in Dolpo.



# 25-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE OF CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN SCHOOL, YEAR BY YEAR



## 1994 : Year of Crystal Mountain School

In April 1994 Crystal Mountain School opens its doors to children 4 to 8 years old, in an existing but unused building with one lone teacher, Kedar. For the first class, CMS registered 20 children, but 40 turned up!

After a trip to Dolpo and an attempt to organize a convoy of grains for the inhabitants, AD decided that the sponsorships of the children will be accepted in the spirit of solidarity, meaning that the money raised from the sponsors will not go to the families but will be devoted to the projects so that all the inhabitants can benefit on a need basis.

By the end of 1994 there were 148 members who placed their trust in the association. In April Frédérique and Renaud Fontarosa, along with Joelle Crocq, organized a second benefit concert of classical music at the Église des Billettes in Paris.



## 1995: Year of the Health Post and Lang school

This year saw the opening of a small school in Lang Valley, the setting up of a Health Post in the Tarap Valley, the initial provisioning of financial assistance to the *Amchis* (local healers), the creation of a village committee for the project (Tarap Reberang Tsokpa), and the launch of Tibetan language classes (which is not part of the Nepalese curriculum). At CMS, we broached ecology, starting with renewable energy projects for lighting buildings, for cooking, heating water and refrigeration.

## 1996: Year of many excellent projects

The summer of 1996 saw the installation of a photovoltaic solar power system, mainly for lighting at Crystal Mountain School. At the same time a 52-minute documentary film about Action Dolpo project entitled "A School on the Roof of the World" was hot as the solar power was being installed, filmed by Christophe Ramage for the French television channel "France 3".



Work was completed on the ecological programs, providing portable solar lamps, solar ovens for cooking and solar battery chargers. Work for bringing water to the school involved the installation of Soltub thermal tubes, a rustic and ecological system for solar heating of water, enabling hot-water showers at an altitude of 4,200 meters.

A study was made of the feasibility of reforesting in the valley, as the valley was barren despite historical evidence of presence of trees. An attempt was made to reintroduce willows, thanks to cuttings given by the Department of Agriculture in the district headquarters Dunai. Also an attempt was made to introduce vegetable cultivation under tunnels.

CMS also opened its doors to children from other valleys in Upper Dolpo who had been similarly deprived of school. In order to develop awareness of basic hygiene, we created a small women's groups to provide awareness to the villagers about health issues.

Also this year sees the construction of a residence for the teaching and support staff and another Health Post building.

The EDF Foundation, the EcoHimal Foundation, the Zufferey Foundation and the Chaine Foundation honored the association with welcome funding, permitting it to set up ambitious projects despite its limited years of existence. A dozen regional delegates and other volunteer members went to great extent to publicize the association and fundraise all over France.

By the end of the year, 166 members showed their confidence in the association.

### **1997: Year of communication**

In July 1997, the documentary film "A School on the Roof of the World" was shown on channel France 3. The reviews in the press were very positive, even excellent, and created lots of enthusiasm about the association in France. The French magazine *Le Mondede l'Éducation* published a two-page interview with Kedar who was then visiting France. A team of multimedia professionals and printing schools invited AD to make an attractive brochure about the association, as well as postcards, which were printed by the thousands at a very low cost. The first edition of the *Tarap* newsletter of information for members saw the light of day.



Committed volunteers continued their work. Some organized activities on behalf of the association (for example hikes, rock-climbing and mountaineering), while others collected gifts, such as 43 kilos of multi-vitamins for Dolpo children.

At CMS, toilets and a bathroom for the staff were built, and the solar-powered ovens were put to use. This was also when we began taking over the expensive costs of the sick who must be taken to Kathmandu because they couldn't be treated in Tarap.

## 1998: Year of consolidation

A major step for the protection of nature was taken this year, as the area of the Phoksundo Park - which was co-managed by WWF - was extended to include Tarap Valley. Tarap became a buffer zone, thus providing protection for its flora and fauna. At CMS, a kitchen/dining rooms were completed for the teachers, as well as a room for the winter guard. A vegetable garden for the school was started. At Lang the villagers were mobilized to rebuild a 4-room school at a better site. Thanks to a health worker, the villagers discovered family planning: contraceptives and pills started to be used. The *amchis*, financially supported by Action Dolpo, join together in a committee *Amchi Tsokpa* for the protection and development of their traditional medicine and ethnobotanical knowledge.

The government sets up an electrification program for the houses in Tarap through which each household received a solar panel, a battery and three lightbulbs.

In Europe a Swiss branch of the association was launched by Fabienne Fellay.



## 1999: Year of the secondary school and the public school

Constructions continued at CMS under Kedar's direction, most notably of bedrooms for the teachers and toilets for the students. Two major events happened this year: first, the opening of a secondary school so that the children can study longer in their valley. Next, CMS and the Lang school were declared Nepalese public schools on July 13th and government teachers appointed by the District Education Office join the team.

## 2000: Year for the environment



This was the year a formal collaboration with WWF was launched. WWF financed the construction of a camping site in Tarap in order to reduce the degradations inflicted on the pastures by trekkers, and an EcoClub at CMS to teach the children about nature conservation, as well as literacy courses for adults. WWF provided the funds and Action Dolpo implemented these programs.

Shey Festival was held this year. The large number of CMS students who participated in the famous Shey Festival (which is only held every twelve years) enhanced the reputation of CMS, not only for its academic quality but also for its role in the protection of the environment. As a result, the school and its director Kedar were rewarded for nature conservation by the Abraham

Conservation Trust.

Construction work did not let up: the construction of a long building consisting of five classrooms was completed. The school complex was surrounded by a long wall built from rocks to fend off livestock, horseriders and yak caravans who blithely passed right through the school courtyard. The water pipes were also refurbished.

## 2001: Year of starting of the hostel in Kathmandu

We started the winter transfer to Kathmandu of the last primary class, so that the students can complete their year's curriculum, incomplete in Tarap because of the short academic session lasting only six months. The classes were held at their hostel, then called Crystal Mountain Residence (later renamed as Snow Leopard Residence).

In Tarap, courses in both theoretical and practical aspects of traditional medicine were introduced at CMS. A Nepalese association installed wood stoves at each home to replace the customary brazier, a noble innovation and major intervention for the villagers. In France the Action Dolpo website was launched.



## 2002: Year of transformation

The local airport at Juphal was closed due to Maoist insurgency making it difficult for children to make the round trips between Tarap and Kathmandu for the winter classes. Hence the secondary school students from CMS started to live in the Kathmandu hostel, and joined schools in Kathmandu for further education. CMS remained a primary school, stopping short of grades 5,6 and 7. A new cohort arrives in Kathmandu from Dolpo each year for secondary education.

## 2003: Year of the creation of ADN

In April, a two-page article written by Thomas Bianchin about Crystal Mountain School appeared in *TREK Magazine*. In order to comply with Nepalese legislation, Kedar registered a Nepalese counterpart association called Action Dolpo Nepal (later renamed as Vision Dolpo).



## 2004: Year of programs for the villages

In Dolpo, we created a Savings and Credit Cooperative to stop indebted villagers from losing their land, as they were preyed upon by outside usurers. Reserve funds of the villagers were matched by funds from Action Dolpo. Workshops for women "health workers" were organized to spread information about hygiene and health. In addition to these health workers, we hired a nurse to improve health care for the women.

CMS welcomed 103 students. In winter, several teachers attended teacher training courses in Kathmandu.

## 2005: Year of the construction of the solar building

The year marked the completion of an enormous project in Tarap: the construction of a passive solar building at CMS. The building proved to be life-changing for CMS because it ultimately allowed CMS to run winter schools in frigid temperatures right at the heart of the Himalayas. By its simple structure, the building stored the solar heat during the day and restituted at night. This exceptional building was only made possible by the generosity of an extraordinary private donor.



In Kathmandu, the name of the Crystal Mountain Residence was changed to Snow Leopard Residence (SLR). Students were enrolled as day students in Tibetan schools in town, but continued to live together as a family at SLR.

## 2006: Year of the revolution

A people's revolution in Nepal evicts the King from his throne. The country became a secular democratic republic overnight. Conscious of the dangers threatening their people and community - especially given the fragile political situations and degrading social, environmental and economic status due to yartsagunbu boom - three students interrupted their studies in order to work in Tarap.

To limit the economic hold on the villages by people who came from Lower Dolpo, we created a Cooperative for buying and selling basic necessities. Also, to stop indebted villagers from losing their lands, we launched a Cooperative Fund for microcredit.



## 2007: Year of tensions as well as success

This year, a crisis hits Crystal Mountain School as Maoists cadres intervene in school administration. Marie and Kedar hold their stands, and the villagers provide strong support to Action Dolpo. After a brief chaos that saw the withdrawal of Action Dolpo, CMS resumes its regular programs.

In Kathmandu, a student named Phurwa Gurung received his School Leaving Certificate with distinction. His friend Passang missed the distinction by a hair. Gyalpo was awarded the mention of distinction in Tibetan language and was rated first for the whole country. Gyalpo was admitted to the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) in Varanasi, India. Phurwa Lama became the first student to return to Dolpo and work as a teacher at CMS.

## 2008: Year of the republic

The villagers created their own association - the Dolpo Dho Tarap Welfare Committee - with the main objectives of helping the fellow villagers and preserve their culture.

In April, the Maoists won the legislative elections in Nepal, but they had to work with the other parties which had dethroned the King two years prior. The republic was proclaimed.

At the end of the year, we received a first report on the situation in Dolpo coming from the students. After five years away from home, the first group of students who studied in Kathmandu were able to leave for a vacation to their villages.

This year also sees the construction in Dolpo of a building to house the Cooperative for buying and selling items for basic needs. The government installed a satellite telephone line for the villagers. In Kathmandu grades 6 and 7 were welcomed in the residence, which had been moved to a larger place near Boudha stupa.

## 2009: Year of the creation of VISION DOLPO



After three years' absence from Dolpo, during which time he recouped his energy, Kedar decided to resume his work in Dolpo. Three former students were going to teach at the school with him. CMS welcomed its first boarder students, who were from the little school in Lang, as they could not follow classes regularly at home. At the end of the year, the winter classes were launched for the first time and the new solar building welcomed around 40 boarders.

Once again Kedar gets a large building project off the ground: the foundation of a new passive solar building which will be the dispensary. Until then the Health Post had been housed in one room of the Amchi Clinic. The project to build agricultural greenhouses for the villagers was launched in partnership with them. The objective was to grow vegetables, but the villagers found another use for it too: a warm shelter for their winter work (spinning, weaving, sewing, tool-making, etc.).

On March 2, 2009, the students in Kathmandu launched their own association called Vision Dolpo which acted as the partner organization for Action Dolpo in Nepal.

## 2010: Year of the construction of the passive solar dispensary

In Kathmandu, Lhakpa Gurung succeeded his SLC examination with distinction. In Tarap not far from CMS, the building of the dispensary proceeded, thanks to generous funds provided by the same private donor.



## 2011: Year of the great festival



In an endeavor to reduce the costs in Kathmandu, Vision Dolpo relaunched secondary school at CMS, starting with the 6th grade. Two vegetable gardens were added to the existing large school greenhouse. Final touches were made to the dispensary which accommodated a medical team composed of two CMS alumni. We deplored the considerable degradations to the high pastures, caused by excessive number of *yartsagunbu* gatherers. A major event captivated the school and the valley: the Dolpo Dho Tarap Festival which was presided over by the great spiritual master of the Nyingma Tibetan Buddhist lineage, Rabjam Rinpoche. Hervé Tiberghien films a 90-minute documentary entitled *The Days of the Tarap featuring CMS*.

## 2012: Year of 'Dolpo Spring'

A small revolution at the beginning of the year suddenly drove our former students to head to the project. Phurwa became the new project coordinator in place of Kedar, while Lhakpa assisted Loday at the hostel. Gyalpo became the president of Vision Dolpo. CMS alumni imposed compulsory volunteer work on themselves, who were required to teach winter classes at CMS. The villagers also got involved by contributing funds for the winter school expenses. Five teachers and two health workers trained by the project work in Tarap. Work on the water supply for the school was undertaken, as well as maintenance of the passive solar building, since the facade had been damaged.

The inside of the solar building received its final touches. The One Heart Worldwide association equipped a Birth Center providing a solar power system, portable ultrasound and other equipments. An EcoClub was created again and our students and teachers prepared for the big Shey Festival, which takes place only every 12 years. The Board of Directors decided to end the systematic reimbursement of health care expenses incurred by villagers who go to Kathmandu, as they were in a better financial situation thanks to *yartsagunbu* income. The year 2012 also saw the updating of the association status during an Extraordinary General Assembly in France.



## 2013: Year of the 20th anniversary and of solar light

The dispensary received a photovoltaic system for lighting and the use of health care equipment. A Swedish friend of the project donated a solar electrification system to Crystal Mountain School. It is strong enough to supply electricity for all the needs of the solar buildings: lighting, computers, cell phones, etc. In Kathmandu, Lhakpa became the sole man-in-charge of the Snow Leopard Residence. In France, we rejoiced the existence of the association for 20 years. The 43rd issue of the *Tarap* newsletter was devoted to a retrospective of these years.



## 2014: Year of the yartsagumbu war



A conflict arised between the people of Tarap and the management of the Shey Phoksundo National Park concerning the rights of the villagers to collect a fee from thousands of *yartsagunbu* gatherers who invade their high pastures in the springtime, destroying the flora and the fauna as they go. Rights of the locals to manage their own resources were withdrawn by the National Park without any consultation with locals. The inhabitants protested and were violently suppressed by the Armed Police Force killing two villagers.

Some changes at the head of the project: Gyalpo replaced Phurwa as Project Coordinator, whereas Kedar takes up the post of Headmaster at CMS.

Agreement was given for the purchase of 10 educational computers, called "green laptops." At SLR the staff was reduced as much as possible: the sole remaining are the cook and the manager. A student suffering from a serious disease was saved thanks to the financial support of his sponsor and Action Dolpo.

## 2015: Year of the earthquakes

The earth shook whole of Nepal, as it did our friends in France. Thirty students were living in a four- story building! The building remained standing and the youths are physically safe and sound but the traumatic effect on them was profound. They refused to go back into the slightly-damaged building; instead they lived in tents setup in the courtyard for one month and only went upstairs when the monsoon rain forced to do so. Action Dolpo launched a fund-raising for the disaster victims and raised about 50,000 euros. Lhakpa left SLR at the beginning of the year in order to help his family in Tarap. He was replaced as head of the residence by Pasang who is



still a student. All routes in Nepal leading to India were blocked for months. The country was subjected to serious food and fuel shortages as a result. Shortage of rice also hits Tarap as the roads between Nepal and China closed due to the earthquake, and as the income from *yarsakumbu* dries up. Most families were confronted by food shortages. Tarap gets access to internet for the first time.

Canadian trekkers who had visited CMS made an extraordinary gift of 13,500 euros, enabling work to start on the project to build a boarding house.

## 2016: More green houses

A large greenhouse for growing vegetables was built at CMS, as well as three houses at its premise.

## 2017: Year of effervescence

It'd been two years since snow fell in Dolpo. Water for irrigating the fields were scarce this year. Certain cultivation fields had to be abandoned. The *yartsaganbu* harvest was meagre which exacerbate the economic situation of the villagers.

CMS saw the departure of two of its long timeteachers: the Tibetan teacher Rigzin who departed from this life, and Kedar, the pillar of the project, who chose to retire.

A reevaluation of the salaries was undertaken, which led to the salaries being organized through a savings and social protection fund, the Provident Fund.

Three important social programs were set up for the villagers. The first was a loan program for buying and transporting rice which was agreed to for the families in Lang, who have endemic shortages of food. Another loan was granted to five families in Tarap to help them pay off their debts and improve their financial situations, which were strained by usurious interest rates of 36%. A Cooperative for buying basic necessities was launched in Dho and it worked well. During the summer, the Tarap River overflowed and damaged the wall surrounding the school, even threatening buildings.



A partnership with the Rockn'Wood association was set up for the construction of a boarding house for CMS. For the first time a scholarship was awarded to students who had finished their high school to pursue their Bachelor's degrees. The scholarships were only possible thanks to exceptional sponsorships by members. A former student who had joined law degrees was added to the list. SLR faced a tuberculosis epidemic among its residents, but it finally stamped out. In France the website for the association was updated.

## 2018: More projects

Snow had fallen abundantly in Dolpo during the winter and spring. Five volunteer teachers had joined CMS. Construction of new classrooms were started. Numerous projects were voted on favorably by the Board of Directors in France including the construction of new blocks, 200 menstrual kits for girls, roof replacements, consolidation of the river bed, etc. Four students were granted scholarships to work towards their Bachelor's degrees in Kathmandu.



## 2019: 25th anniversary of Crystal Mountain School

In April, three Architects from Rockn'Wood visited with Gyalpo to study the site for the future building construction of the school with fully solar powered, well insulated, using local materials and anti-seismic and did a detail physical planning of the school for the future. And one french engineer has fully guided the river embankment project to save the school from flooding river during monsoon.

# Special Activities from 2017-2019

Note: We need to continue the work for the next five or more years to fully implement all the programs.

## 1) Restructuring of classes for grades 1-3 and nursery

- a. To try to mitigate the age-gap problem.

Remarks: In 2017, students were distributed into 'transition classes' based on age group and taught with the appropriate curriculum in mind (grades 1-3). The next summer session students were upgraded to the appropriate grades based on performance.

A more long term approach will be needed to really tackle this problem, including investing heavily in Early Childhood Development Centers in all wards in Dolpo. Any new school related infrastructure should be fully winter-proofed to allow schooling and care throughout the year. As early years are vital to success in the future, this should be the number one priority for the next two years.

## 2) Implementation of the national curriculum (still in the initial stages)

- a. Continuous Assessment System
- b. Exams proportioned properly for different topics as per curriculum guidelines
- c. Interactive and Group Learning

Remarks: There is a need for a comprehensive study and development of a curriculum that is relevant to Dolpo. This is a focus for many local level governments throughout Nepal, especially as people have started realizing that a relevant curriculum and learning in native tongue are vital in early years of schooling. CMS has been a leader in that regard. Here is an opportunity to also lead by investing in the development of a curriculum (under the new rights and guidelines for local level governments). With that said, the current curriculum, if implemented properly, remaining true to its spirit can still be very useful in bridging the gap in quality education.

### 3) Digital Learning Initiative (still in the initial stages)

- a. E-paath
- b. E-pustakalya

Remarks: Installed a computer lab with 10 raspberry pis in 2017 summer session. Donation of 10 macbooks and 10 ipads from David Hoffman, Shenandoah University also agreed to in 2017 summer session. All macbooks and ipads arrived in Kathmandu by the end of 2018. They have safely been transported to CMS this summer session (2019). Thanks to Peter Werth, Himalayan Currents Inc, a new mini solar wind hybrid has been set up in 2018 to charge the laptops.

A new server from OLE-Nepal was also purchased in 2018 to run E-paath and E-pustakalaya as the old one stopped functioning. The new macbooks have also been installed with the new version of E-paath but it can also be accessed from the server, so can be used from any device with wifi connection. A more robust system will be needed to properly implement this digital learning initiative on all the computers. Especially with the arrival of additional computers in the form of powerful macbooks, there is also a need for a dedicated computer lab. I recommend dedicating (or building a new one) space for a large combined computer lab and library. The lab needs to be winter-proofed with passive heating, and stocked with good furniture, natural and artificial lights. It could be promoted as the primary space where our students interact and learn. This lab will be valuable during the winter session especially as students will be able to learn on their own with supervision from a few local teachers throughout the winter break.

The new E-Paath comes loaded with extra features, especially for Maths allowing students to test themselves as much as they want with randomly generated questions designed to test conceptual learning, and learn at their own pace. A bonus: there is a chapter on Dho-Tarap as well: <http://epaath.olenepal.org/start.html?id=nepgth01&lang=np&grade=3>

E-Pustakalya is another big resource that we haven't been able to implement fully. A dedicated computer lab+library would help solve the problem. Also, if we can upgrade the server and install more powerful wifi router, we can provide the e-library service to the general public as well. It has thousands of books and resources for young children, and adults. We can also work with OLE-Nepal to add Tibetan language content and other content related to Dolpo; there is currently only one Tibetan-English book in the library. This is another avenue for collaboration with OLE-Nepal. With their help and our existing infrastructure (with a little more investment), we can establish a public e-library for the whole village.

The better we incorporate E-Paath and E-Pustakalaya into the general schooling hours the better outcomes we can hope to

achieve in terms of students achieving all learning objectives. Students of all grades can use the resources as they are built for grades 1-8. In the near future, OLE-Nepal will also develop content for early childhood education. For details, please refer to the "CMS 2017 Report"

#### 4) **Translating E-Paath content to Tibetan (Planning Stage)**

Remarks: Another great leap would be in meaningful educational intervention at CMS is to work towards a curriculum in the native tongue. What better way to get started than by translating content in E-Paath to Tibetan. Translating the texts and the sounds is relatively simple to do from a technical perspective for OLE-Nepal. Since all the content is open source, we could in fact modify their content if we wanted to revamp the whole thing. But more realistically, we will need to provide financial and other support to OLE-Nepal to find one or more good translators, to record and deploy E-Paath in Tibetan, as well as in Nepali and English. Currently, E-paath users can easily switch between Nepali and English. If we are successful, they could also switch to Tibetan. This would be a great resource not just for CMS and students from other schools in Dolpo, but also all communities in the entire high Himalayas.

#### 5) **Music and Arts Programs**

Remarks: There is now a good infrastructure for arts and music programs at the school. Focus needs to be on hiring a good music/arts teacher, who can also teach a subject. Nyima, with the help of locals, has been continuing to teach local music and dance. We should also invest in some local instruments and other necessary equipment, and as much as possible, try to work with Dolpo artists.



#### 6) **Outdoor Education and Regular Educational Trips**

Remarks: Started with a trip to Ringmo in 2017. Students wrote group reports on three separate topics, and also learned some outdoor skills and map reading skills. In 2018, one group of students visited Ringmo. The other Tinje and nearby places.

These trips are great opportunities for students to learn about Dolpo and visit places they might have never otherwise. But also sharpen their knowledge of nature, conservation, build leadership and group-work skills, project and presentation skills,

and also express themselves freely among their peers and teachers. They should be a mainstay of our annual academic calendar!

## 7) Automation and Programming (barely started)

Remarks: OLE-Nepal and a few other organizations are starting to focus on teaching students' automation and programming using cheap and easy to use devices like raspberry-pis, arduino boards and chip controlled motors. Many of these are designed for young students below grade 8. CMS now has a great infrastructure to start teaching students' computer science, programming and automation formally. We need to hire a good teacher, and work with partners like OLE-Nepal who can train our local teachers. A couple of weeks of training would suffice. And, we will probably need to invest a little bit initially for any remaining equipment.

Ipads are also perfect devices for students to learn programming and robotics in. Now that we have 10 powerful and expensive ipads, we need to make use of them. The macbooks and raspberry pis are also equally good to learn with. That makes it 30 computers to teach all our students with!

## 8) CMS-Maya Exchange Program

Remarks: With generous help from Drokpa (Sienna Craig and Ken Bauer), we have been able to run an exchange program with Maya Universe Academy in Tanahun District for our graduating grade 7 students for 1-2 months since 2017. There have been a total of two such exchanges so far over two winter sessions. They have been quite successful so far with a lot of positive feedback from all the students who have participated. This is another great initiative that has given a multitude of benefits to our students to grow intellectually and emotionally before transitioning to a school in Kathmandu. Moreover, they experienced learning in the middle hilly rural area, which they no doubt will look back on as one of their best memories during their time at CMS.

There has been tentative discussion about having Maya students at our school but that will take some effort as it will be more difficult financially and otherwise to plan a trip for young students to CMS.

With Sienna and Ken's help, we have successfully completed this two year pilot program. We now should commit to funding this program annually through our school's annual budget to ensure sustainability and provide all future students with the opportunity. The average annual cost is around \$1500-3000 for around 10 students for 1-2 months.

## 9) Secmol-Ladakh Visit in Feb 2018

Remarks: Four Grade 10 students visited Secmol in Feb 2018 with Phurwa, Gyalpo and Pawan. Here is a summary of what we did during the visit: <https://visiondolpo.org/2018/02/22/secmol-and-ladakh-trip/>.

The Ladakh trip to Secmol gave us new ideas for a number of new exciting projects to improve the quality of education at CMS. Secmol had successfully helped design and implement a locally relevant curriculum in Ladakhi and English, providing us a great motivation to do the same in Dolpo. Secmol has many impressive feats. It is a leader in innovative passive and earth building techniques, and other impressive projects like the Ice Stupa project. Secmol's female ice-hockey team regularly represents the Indian national team in international competitions, showing how much they have succeeded in engaging youth while giving them the opportunity to excel at different things, harnessing the opportunities that Ladakhi culture and landscape provides. Following their example, CMS and Vision Dolpo aims to implement similar programs to uplift the quality of education, engage youth in the village, and make winters fun and a time for tourists to visit.

## 10) Ice Skating and Ice Hockey

Remarks: With more generous support from Sienna and donations from the Upper Valley Community in Hanover, NH, CMS has also successfully acquired ... Ice skates. Nyima and a few students attempted skating in Tarap last winter. Now, we need to focus on getting more equipment, building an ice-rink every winter, getting volunteers and trainers at the school and encourage the local government to invest in infrastructure and promotion in partnership with tourism businesses and organizations like the Nepal Skii Foundation.

Winter sports were essential in attracting youth to remain in the villages during the harsh winters in Ladakh and surrounding areas. Now, there are several local level and regional competitions, with players from these areas even representing India internationally. During our visit, we watched an ice hockey match for a cup competition in the city's outdoor rink stadium in Leh. Perhaps, one day we can host regional competition in Dho.



## 25th Anniversary (Silver Jubilee Celebration):

To commemorate the 25th year anniversary of Crystal Mountain School, we organize a grand "Dolpo Festival and Crystal Mountain School Silver Jubilee 2019" in Dho Tarap from September 10–14 in the presence of Hon'ble education Minister and other ministers, Founder of the school and other Sponsors, students, teachers from other schools of Dolpo and the Dolpopa with different educational activities. Celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of this school not only marks its long history, but also projects the success story and the future visions of the school for the next 25 years.











**Vision Dolpo**

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



**Action Dolpo**

[www.actiondolpo.fr](http://www.actiondolpo.fr)

