



NEWSLETTER  
2014

SPITI PROJECTS



Students performing a festival dance

## The grand opening of the Community Centre is on track for 31st July 2015

**J**oan Pollock went to Spiti three times this year to monitor the progress of the Community Centre. With a team of architects from the Earth Institute in Auroville south India, magnificent progress has been made. A huge amount of support has been given on the ground by the Spiti Projects Society, our local team. Roopu has managed the banking side from Manali, Jeet manager in charge of purchasing materials, Tashi the site manager and Ramesh has given advice on the inside design of the building. The local masons, plumbers, carpenters and labourers have done a magnificent job.

We have been supported by Adventure Ashram who have made a large contribution to the cost of the land and in building this eco-environmental community centre for the people of Spiti.

Tibet Relief Fund have also been incredibly generous in their donation towards this worthwhile project.



Three architects and the foreman



Constructing the dry toilets



## The Community Centre: Work in Progress



Exposed drainage system



Front view of the Community Centre



Preparing the steel joists



Rear view of the Community Centre



Roof joists in position



Showing window frames

### Why are we doing this?

- ❖ To return to the traditional method of building in this high altitude area, showing that to build with rammed earth and adobe bricks is cheaper than using cement.
- ❖ To show that by building in this way the thermal qualities of adobe blocks will keep the inside above zero when the temperature is minus 20 – 30C outside.
- ❖ To show that by using large glass windows in the building we harness solar passive energy as a way of heating the building. The valley has over 300 days of sunlight per year.

### Who is supporting us?

- ❖ We have been supported by Adventure Ashram who has made a large contribution to the cost of the land, and in building this eco- environmental community centre for the people of Spiti.

**However, we still need to find £70.000 to complete the building. Your generous support is still needed to give the Spiti people the facilities of eye care and dental care that most of us have but they – as yet, don't. Thank you in advance for your kind support.**

### Saving the environment by not burning wood

It is so important for the future of the Spitians that they can keep warm without burning wood!

Wood will eventually run out and we all need to try and save our environment as best we can.



Lorries bring supplies of wood to the valley



Negotiating a price



One family's supply of wood for the winter



## A huge thank you to The Knitters



Janet McNeal sorting sweaters



Happy children with new sweaters



Do I look good in this?

**T**his all started in 2007 when Janet McNeal started to knit sweaters for the children of Spiti, and encouraged the ladies of an old peoples' home she supports, to do the same. We put the knitting pattern on to our website, well this sparked off a huge resurgence in knitting throughout the British Isles, and there has been a flood of sweaters ever since. It's been amazing.

We are overwhelmed by the response and have received lovely letters from people all over the UK. The retired pensioners dug their knitting needles out of the attic, formed knitting groups and this gave retired, sometimes lonely people a new purpose, especially those living on their own. One man wrote to me and explained that after the death of his wife of 40 years, he joined the knitting group his wife had formed originally, to complete her unfinished sweater. He sent us two lovely sweaters that he had knitted with a note saying "to keep a child warm". I was so touched. I found two little children of the right size, I photographed the sweaters on the Spiti children and sent them to him and encouraged him to continue his good work. There are many other similar stories.

Another husband wrote to say that his wife was waiting for an operation on her back, she couldn't walk



Joan and the Edinburgh Knitters

but took up knitting. He said "it saved our marriage".

Edinburgh Madeleine, after a visit to Spiti, invited her swimming group to "Knit for Spiti". Up to date we have received over 4000 sweaters, hats, gloves and baby clothes knitted by all you kind people. Madeleine also gives talks around Edinburgh and raises funds for the charity.

Two General Practitioners are encouraging their depressed patients to knit as a therapy and this is proving to be very successful. They have the knitting pattern available in their surgery.

Fiona from Hereford took over her mother's knitting circle after she passed away. They continue to send us beautifully knitted garments.

Parcels arrive from Wales, Isle of Wight, Swindon and Croydon on a regular basis. We are always delighted to receive them, thank you.

What the knitters say is "We feel so happy to see our sweaters on the children from the photos you send us, and this encourages us to carry on knitting".

We need additional funds to cover the cost of transporting the sweaters to Spiti. Would it be possible for the knitters to have coffee mornings to raise enough money to cover the cost of us taking extra bags on the plane to Delhi? Up to now Jet Airways have been very generous with kilos, but this has now changed and we need to pay a bit more. We take 6-8 large bags of sweaters to Spiti whenever we can. Jeet, Rakesh and Joan distribute them to the children in the remote villages after they have done a hygiene clinic. The children are thrilled to have them and don't take them off until they wear out!



The knitting arrives in Spiti





## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Opening of the Community Centre

The Grand Opening of the Community Centre will take place on 31st July 2015, the date chosen by an astrologer from the office of His Holiness Dalai Lama. It happens to be a full blue moon day, and considered very auspicious.



I shall running a tour for this wonderful occasion.  
**Contact Indus Experiences on 0208 901 7320**

### The Kanchen Memorial Girls Hostel

As soon as our other projects have been completed, we will be able to give our full attention to the building of the Girls Hostel on the land given to us in New Kaza by the Government. Currently, they are crammed into an old draughty building, where there are 3 or 4 girls per small room. Their lease runs out in two years. We are aware of this and are doing our best to raise sufficient funds for the new building. This will provide lodging in a suitable atmosphere for the poorest students in the valley, so that they can benefit from the best education available. Without this hostel, the girls would not be able to study in Kaza, and would not be able to gain an education, and thus securing their future.



### Child sponsorship

Adventure Ashram will be taking over the Administration of Spiti Projects Charity and the Child Sponsorship scheme before the end of this year. For those who generously support the education of children in Spiti, we would like to assure you that this will continue in the same way, by distributing the annual sponsorship in July.



### Handing over to Adventure Ashram

We made an agreement with Adventure Ashram that they would take full responsibility for the operation and administration of Spiti Projects from 2014.



Adventure Ashram is a grant-giving organisation founded and supported by adventurers. The bond created through their passion for adventure inspires them to help the communities that live in the places they explore. Their mission is to improve the lives of the poorest people through health and education.

Adventure Ashram has committed to support Spiti Projects India for the long term with the funds and commitments passed over from Spiti Projects UK, including completing the projects currently in progress.

We are all excited to be handing over the baton to very capable hands in Adventure Ashram, and would like to say a big Thank You to the Trustees and Fritha Vincent, Project Manager.

**Contact her on: [fritha@adventureashram.org](mailto:fritha@adventureashram.org)**

Joan Pollock looks forward to working with Adventure Ashram as a Patron, and continuing to support the ongoing projects in Spiti Valley.

### The water pump

The weather has been against us for the last couple of years, as regards the Water Pump. There have been unpredictable, terrible storms through these mountains during May and June, which has delayed the installation of the pump in Upper Mane village. However we hope to correct that next year, and have planned to complete the installation in May 2015.



### Leaving the valley

Joan, Satprem and Swati left the Valley in early October just as winter was approaching. The temperature had dropped below zero, and we were lucky to get out before the first snowfall.

Although this is my final newsletter, I shall continue to support the project actively.

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