

# SPITI PROJECTS

NEWSLETTER 2017

## Solar energy arrives at the Community Centre in time for winter



**The recently installed solar panels on the roof of the Community Centre.**

A day of celebration – was the day the solar panel installation was completed on the roof of the Community Centre in Kaza, just in time for the winter!

Donated and installed by the government, the panels came all the way from Chandigarh by truck, a three day journey over very rough terrain. The panels took a week to install by the engineers and are now in operation before the weather changes and the winter comes. **Congratulations to all who helped make this to happen. I can't wait to see it.**

Meanwhile work continues on the facilities inside the building. Furniture has been made by local craftsmen, the kitchen and bathroom facilities have been installed and we have incorporated eight bedrooms in the building for home-stays and summer visitors. Work is currently under way on the craft centre where we will sell traditional and locally made shawls, socks and



**Village celebrations, meetings and cultural events during the winter months can now take place in the new facilities of the Community Centre.**

other items that the village produces. The income from visitors and sales from the shop should help to make the centre self financing.

## Two Spiti women are training as technicians for the new Eye Vision Centre in Kaza

Spiti Projects are proud to announce that we have funded two young women to train at the the L V Prasad Hyderabad Eye Institute, a World Health Organization which offers a Vision Technician course to students. The six month course started in August and they are learning about Visual Acuity, Refraction, Pupil function, Ocular mobility and Visual Fields. This will be followed by practical experience and further teaching at the Rotary Eye Hospital in Palampur Himachel Pradesh India.

Currently we are trying to raise £150,000 to equip the Eye Vision Centre in the Community Centre in Kaza. Once this is completed these young women will work there as technicians.

### The need for preventative eye care

It is estimated that there are thousands of blind people in the region, with about 2,500 people requiring cataract operations and refractive treatment. This number would double in time without preventative eye care.

Currently there is no eye care service within 300km radius of Kaza, the centre of the Spiti Valley. Many find it too expensive to travel and so forgo treatment. Our proposed Eye Centre would be located in the Community Centre and would have a room for surgical operations to be performed and a room for refraction treatment.

The International Eye Foundation based in Washington DC USA has established and supported International Eye Care, first in South India during the 1990s and now throughout India. The inhabitants of the Western Himalaya are fortunate to be considered for a tertiary Eye Care Centre in Himachel Pradesh North India, to cover the needs of the outlying areas of the region, Lahoul, Spiti and Kinnour. This will give over 60,000 patients annual treatment not currently available.



The two young women from Spiti chosen to train on a six week course at The Hyderabad Eye Clinic.

### Aims of The Eye Vision Centre in Kaza

- To create access for the 20,000 inhabitants of Spiti and the surrounding areas to be able to receive eye treatment. Up to now the entire population of Lahoul & Spiti areas has had to travel 300 kms to either Shimla or Manali to find any kind of eye testing or treatment.
- To offer operations to patients diagnosed with cataracts, or any other Ophthalmic problems. These would be undertaken at the Community Centre by surgeons visiting Kaza from the Rotary Eye Hospital in Palampur at least twice a year.
- To create a self-sustaining, income generation model of eye care services – this will include free care for the needy.
- To install an internet and web connection with an ophthalmologist at the Rotary Eye Hospital in Palampur to confirm diagnosis.
- To enable people to purchase a variety of lenses and frames of their choice at affordable prices in Kaza.



A patient being treated by experienced doctors at The Rotary Eye Hospital which will oversee our centre in Kaza.



The Eye Centre will provide care for the needy and the ability to purchase affordable glasses.

# Skillful lorry drivers manage the perilous roads in the valley



**Courageous lorry drivers navigating the dangerous mountain roads in the valley bringing the necessary supplies to the Spiti people.**

Travelling in Spiti is not always easy, the roads are unpredictable and every journey is different. The drivers always say a prayer that they will have a safe journey.

Within the last twenty years the Spiti people have moved from having a few stale vegetables for sale in the market, to an abundance of fresh vegetables delivered daily for consumption. They also now have a choice of household goods, clothes, shoes and even the luxury of TVs, mobile phones etc. This is all due to the courageous drivers who drive on these treacherous mountain roads to supply the Spiti people with these goods.

## A hair raising experience

I was once at the infamous Dorni crossing. The water was 2 to 3 feet deep in parts. Our driver, in the Toyota Qualis in which we were travelling, was nervous. He took off his shoes & socks and walked the course to test the depth and power of the water crashing down. How were we to cross this ferocious waterfall? Soon, we were joined by five truck drivers travelling in convoy. On these dangerous mountain roads the truck drivers often travel together, to support each other through the difficult parts. This time they all viewed the crossing, rearranged some of the rocks and then one by one proceeded.

## Camaraderie amongst drivers

The first truck with a light load crossed safely, the second with a very heavy load lurched from side to side as it hit the rocks under the water, and nearly went over. I gasped and felt my heart throb. With tremendous skill the driver steered his way out of the water. It was like driving on black ice and calls for terrific skill. Each truck was guided across the water by the other drivers, stage by stage. Next came our jeep. Although I would have preferred to wade across, I realized the power of the water could easily have knocked me over the edge and I might have ended up tumbling down the mountain. I gritted my teeth, gave as

much encouragement to the driver as I could muster as we set off. We rocked and rolled across but, thanks to my driver's fantastic courage and skill, we reached the other side safely. Once we were all across, all the drivers thanked each other and shook hands. The camaraderie among the drivers working together on these dangerous roads and seeing the way they cared for each other, left me feeling emotionally overwhelmed.



**Above shows the extent of the fresh vegetable market in 1993. Below, twenty years later, with the construction of roads and trucks bringing supplies, the choice is much better.**



# Sponsoring a child's education makes a huge difference to their lives



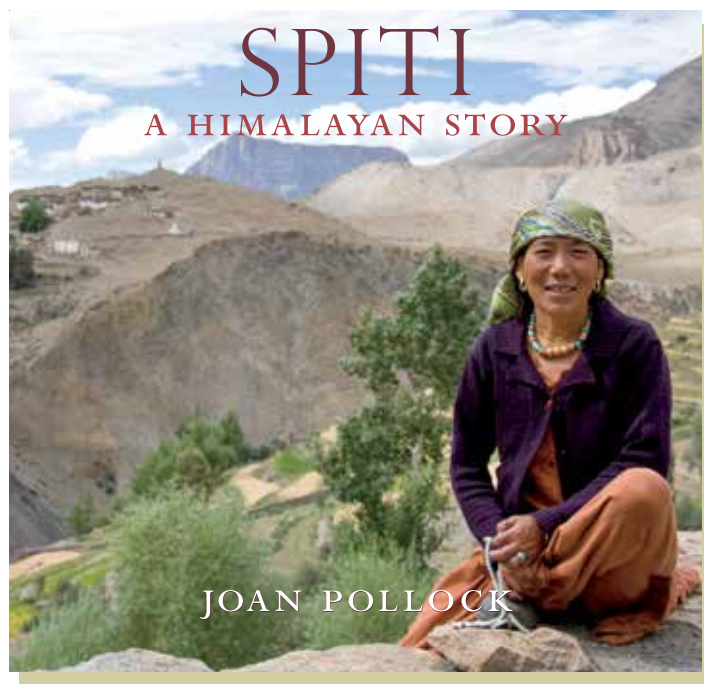
Two of the children who are currently benefiting from the sponsorship scheme.



Children receiving a sound and basic education in the new school in Spiti.

By offering sponsorship to a child from a poor family, you give them an opportunity beyond their wildest dreams. For just £200 a year for 10 years, you can give them a chance in life to get a qualification and earn a living that will help to support their parents and family. So, thank you for your support and please tell your friends there are lots of lovely children waiting to be given a chance in life.

For details of how to sponsor a child's education contact Joan at: [joanpollock99@gmail.com](mailto:joanpollock99@gmail.com)



## SPITI A HIMALAYAN STORY

To coincide with the exhibition held last year in April we published SPITI A Himalayan Story, a photographic essay which explores the many aspects of the life and culture in the Spiti Valley.

Joan Pollock's wonderful photographs follow the landscape, the people and their customs through the seasons and give an extraordinarily vivid insight into this traditional society trying to come to terms with the modern world.

Paperback, 262 x 255mm, 122 pages  
£20.00 plus postage  
Available from: [joanpollock99@gmail.com](mailto:joanpollock99@gmail.com)

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