



Amici di Qinghai & Swiss Friends

Beijing and Minusio, August 5, 2012

Activities report H1/2012

Dear friends and donors

The *Amici di Qinghai* made five visits to Qinghai in the first eight months of 2012, including one by Yolanda and Anne-Marie each. As in previous years, the purpose was:

1. To inspect schools under construction, that have already been approved by the board (Huanquhu, Sicun, Moving Nomad School no 1).
The rain was particularly heavy in recent months and caused some delay in the start and later also in the construction of the various classroom and dormitory buildings. But they should, nonetheless, be ready for the beginning of the new school year in early September, and be of the requested quality, in line with local conditions. An additional moving Nomad school in the Zeku district was also discussed.
2. To control repair or extension works, decided for 2012
Yolanda visited the Kanze school to make sure that the classroom was ready for instruction and the solid flooring done. Furthermore, Yolanda inspected the installation of the IT equipment at the Nisantang school. Anne-Marie controlled the IT building at Xiabrang and the renovation of Zhawo, both financed by the Swissair Children Fund. Erwin controlled and accepted the renovation of the Adrien Firmenich school.
3. To launch a five year scholarship program
Yolanda presented 10 former students of the Quma Timo-Reto primary school with scholarships to attend college/university in 2012/13. And 4 scholarships to students of the Nisantang and 4 of the Haojiaori school, initiated and financed by Mrs. & Mr. Ronner.

Another three visits by the *Amici* are planned for the remaining months of 2012.

As expected, the discussions for new primary school projects have been less smooth than in past years. But keeping the interests of the needy students in mind, the foundation will continue her efforts, while waiting for the “domestic climate” to relax again.

Updates on the projects mentioned have been published on the website of the *Swiss Friends of Qinghai*. Please see the website, if interested: www.schurtenberger.biz/swiss/ Then click on the school in question under projects 2012. The projects of the foundation *Amici di Qinghai* and of the *Swiss Friends of Qinghai* are under the same address.

The accounts of the foundation for 2011 were approved by the foundation’s Board of Directors* in December 2011, the external auditor, Mr. Cristiano Botta, Lugano, in late June 2012. This allowed then to submit them to the competent authorities in Berne (EDI) for regulatory approval. The foundation continues to enjoy tax exemption in Switzerland.

Thanking you once more for your continued support of the activities of the foundation *Amici di Qinghai* and of the *Swiss Friends*, we remain with best wishes for a pleasant summer and a relaxing fall.

Yours gratefully

Yolanda & Erwin



*Avv. Eros Bergonzoli,
Claudio Metzger, Yolanda
and Erwin Schurtenberger

1. School projects 2012 under construction

The construction of the three projects of 2012 has been progressing smoothly so far and in a quality up to the expectations for school buildings in the province of Qinghai, i.e. solid enough to withstand an earthquake of up to 7.5 on the Richter scale. Minor quality claims by the foundation were corrected with acceptable delay.

- **Sicun** (district Tongren): Construction of a classroom building for the students of the Sicun village and the neighboring region, financed by Mrs and Mr Antoine Firmenich, and of a living quarters house for the teachers, financed by Yolanda in memory of her late aunt Rita. The works started with some delay due to rain, but are progressing well and will be ready for the start of the new school year in early September.



- **Huanquhu** (district Tongren, on the highlands): Construction of a dormitory for nomad students, thus enabling them to attend teaching for periods of 10 days, followed by a break of 4 days, during the whole school year. With no dormitory at present, the older students have to attend a village school far away, while those younger students living far from the school, attend the classes on an irregular basis only. The dormitory, financed by the Fidinam Foundation, Lugano, makes a real difference. Anne-Marie Schmid of the Swiss Friends pledged to pay the construction of the teachers living quarters.



- **Moving nomad school** (district of Zeku, Xibushaxiang): This is a meaningful pilot scheme for nomad children in remote and sparsely populated highlands of the Zeku district at 3500 to 3800 m above sea. Groups of 7-10 kids attend one day of instruction a week on an average, given by a teacher who moves around in a car, with the necessary material.

The local Education Bureau in Zeku developed such a model school, together with the *Amici di Qinghai*, in order to enable the children in the pre-school age to get some basic teaching in reading, arithmetic, writing and also playing, they do not enjoy so far. This allows them to be better prepared to attend the boarding school in due time.



- **A moving nomad school no 2 is under consideration** (Qiakeri, Zexiongtang): Based on the encouraging acceptance of the above scheme by all parties concerned -- the parents, the children and the Education authorities --, the *Amici di Qinghai* accepted to consider financing a second moving nomad school in 2012, also in the district of Zeku on the highlands. Erwin discussed the project on site with the parents, the authorities and the prospective teacher in late July.

If accepted by the foundation's board of directors, the project will be co-financed by the *Lions Club Toggenburg* and the *Amici di Qinghai*.



2. Control of completion, renovation and extension works

- Kanze von Solarski School

Yolanda inspected the works in early April and found the quality up to the expectations, but insisted to replace the natural ground around the school building, inside the wall, with a solid ground, in order to protect the buildings from dust and dirt. The work has been implemented last May. The school has been sponsored by the family of Astrid von Solarski and will be formally inaugurated later in the year.



- Computer equipment at Nisantang

The 10 new computers have upgraded the old equipment, installed in 2008 in a meaningful way.



Xiabrang

The construction of an IT-building with the necessary computers, was financed by the *Swissair Childrens Fund* and supervised by A-M Schmid. The project has been well completed.



Zhawo

The transformation of one room into a play-ground and another one into pre-school classroom have also been completed, and will be inaugurated by A-M Schmid, on behalf of the *Swissair Children Fund*, later in the year.



Gerongte Adrien School

A number of minor, but unacceptable quality issues in the renovation of this nice primary school, built in honor Adrien Firmenich has been solved to the full satisfaction of the foundation. Erwin issued the acceptance certificate during a visit on site on July 26.



3. A five-year-scholarship program

Yolanda handed over 10 scholarships to the students of Quma, on behalf of Mrs and Mr Ronner, on April 8, 2012. Another 5 were given to students of Nisantang and yet 4 others to nomad students of Haojiaori. The program has been launched for a first period of five years, and is fully financed by Mrs and Mr. Ronner (Quma school).



The winter is long and rough on the highlands of the Huangnan prefecture, but the few pleasant Summer months compensate a bit for the hardness of the winter.



Temperatures remain below minus 10° to 15°C for four months

But turn lovely from June to September