

Perspectives for minorities through education: Lighthouse project Amguri

(Project status and progress report, March 2020)



The school in Amguri is bursting at the seams again.



Highly concentrated learning is the best.



Good education should give children from conflict areas a perspective for life (Amguri, 2019).

Marked by conflict: Since 1947, Western Assam has repeatedly experienced outbreaks of massive violence between ethnic groups, especially between sanhals, bodos and Muslims. Many fled and have now been living illegally for decades in camps in the primeval forests near Kokrajhar on the border with Bhutan, without income, infrastructure, schools or arable land. These communities need our help!

Hardly any prospects: Tens of thousands of children grow up in the camps. The state does not succeed in protecting them and guaranteeing regular schooling. This is often exploited by criminals. They persuade the poorly educated parents to sell the children or drag them into forced labour and prostitution.

Catastrophic initial situation: Almost all adults are illiterate, and out of 500,000 sanhals we found only 12 graduates. Significantly more than 90% cannot write their own name. Most of the children also do not go to school and remain trapped in a vicious circle of poverty. We want to change that.

Model school Amguri: Since 2008 Childaid Network has been supporting the school project Amguri near Kokrajhar in addition to the "barefoot schools" for several thousand children in the refugee camps. In the beginning there were only bamboo huts and a dusty forecourt where the children romped around with a homemade ball made of patches. Now a modern school with attached boarding schools for girls and boys has been built there. Exemplary playgrounds and sports fields promote the holistic development. There is also a modern vocational training centre.

A joint project: our partners, the Salesians of Don Bosco, have developed this school over the last twelve years to provide access to basic education for the indigenous Santhal minority. German Doctors paid for the buildings, Childaid Network helped with the educational programmes, the



Enthusiastically these children go to school.



34 of 35 students passed their secondary school leaving certificate with very good results in summer 2019. This means they have qualified for the upper school in neighbouring Kokrajhar or vocational training as desired (Amguri, 2019).



On excursions the boarding school children get to know the cultural diversity of the country. But this is simply a spontaneous bath in the nearby river - an opportunity for fun and games (Amguri, 2019).



School building in Amguri after the extension in February 2020.

Taunusgymnasium in Königstein organised fundraising campaigns and financed parts of the equipment - other major donors helped. Volunteers from Childaid Network have taught on site several times. The success is visible. Every year 30-50 young people graduate from the school with good results.

Restocking completed: The school is successful and bursting at the seams. Now 90 children start in the pre-school every year and then push into the school, where two classes per year are now being established. Already 730 children attend the school. In February 2020, a new floor with several classrooms and a small assembly hall was therefore inaugurated, which was financed with the help of major donors from our surroundings for 70,000 €. In the next few years the school is to double again, for which further investments are needed.

Integrated concept: In order to provide the children of minorities with a good basic education, a variety of initiatives are needed. We support the preparation of refugee children for "high school" with care schools and additional language support programs. Gifted pupils from the "barefoot schools" are to be given the opportunity to transfer to the school in Amguri with accommodation in the local boarding school from grade 5 onwards. We are setting up support classes for the English language skills required for this. A scholarship programme enables qualified graduates from Amguri to take their school-leaving examination. The costs for this are currently about 50.000 € per year.

Outlook

In the next few years we will focus on supporting the state schools in the area to ensure that they achieve good quality. We are stepping up our lobbying work with the government so that the promise of good education for all is kept. And we will continue to develop Amguri into a beacon of education for people who were previously excluded from education - for this we ask for your continued support and assistance.

We thank our partners for supporting this program!

March 2020, Thomas Brinkmann, teacher Taunusgymnasium Königstein, coordinator of the school sponsorship