



Jhamtse Gatsal

Children's Community

The garden of love and compassion

Annual Report

April 2020 - March 2021



YEAR IN REVIEW



Covid 19: Our New Normal

2020 was a challenging year for the world at large; Jhamtse Gatsal was no exception! We were on lockdown for nearly a full year from March 2020 until mid-February 2021 due to the pandemic.

With the understanding that we are fortunate to be shielded from the pandemic, the children initiated several projects to make valuable use of their time while school was shut down. They made videos in the local language to educate the villagers about the pandemic and preventive measures to take to stay safe. These videos can be found [here](#) and [here](#). They also made masks for the community members and for distribution in the region.

Our Covid-19 plan includes:

- Community members can not leave the district unless there is an emergency.
- Necessary travel is allowed within district with prior permission.
- No visitors are allowed to enter Jhamtse Gatsal campus unless essential.
- Prior permission must be sought to enter the community premises.
- All rations are bought from within the district and quarantined for 48-72 hours before distribution or use.
- Only designated members are allowed to handle market bought materials following due protocols.
- All community members follow regular hand washing and sanitization protocols.
- Masking is mandatory when interacting with outsiders or when returning from a visit outside the campus.
- Spaces and materials used when guests are received are locked down for 48 hours and properly cleaned and sanitized prior to becoming accessible for community use.
- Anyone with cough, cold, fever or any signs of illness is immediately isolated.
- Any community members, who are/have been outside the district, are quarantined for a minimum of 14 days.



Workshops and Programs



- Lobsang Phuntsok conducted a series of reflective workshops and discussions during the lockdown to help children and staff gain a deeper understanding of the Jhamtse vision and mission, history, and plans. Many powerful insights, change orders, and programs came out of our yearlong reflection.
- Lobsang Phuntsok conducted weekly Karmayaan sessions with the children and staff members. He teaches reflection through the 5-step Karmayaan process using real-life examples from the children's and staff members' personal experiences.
- Lobsang Phuntsok conducted a set of workshops on giving and receiving feedback. We discussed the importance of creating a culture of open feedback and the different ways feedback can be given and received.
- Several of our staff used their time during the lockdown to gain new skills. Some teachers chose to learn more about SEE learning, language teaching, and student self-care. Other staff members decided to learn English to improve their communication skills and took part in Karmayaan and mind-training sessions with Lobsang Phuntsok.

We initiated a 9-month Gap Year program for our high school graduates to help them find their purposeful path in life. This program enables graduates to hone their socio-emotional skills, build IT and communication skills, and reconnect with their roots through service before leaving this region for further education. This program will include three verticals, each of which will take three months:

- Socio-emotional Development
- Community Service
- ICT Skill development

We introduced the 7 Elements of Growth program wherein each school year from Grades Pre-K to 5 will focus on one of these growth elements, namely: interdependence, equanimity, gratitude, generosity, love, compassion, and responsibility.

To continue deepening these seven elements of growth in children and staff members beyond Grade 5, we have decided to rename the seven days of the week to these elements with purposeful activities and practices associated with each of them.

We introduced a new Social-Emotional Evaluation System (SEES). SEES allows us to observe ourselves (staff and children), reflect based on evidence using Karmayaan, and evaluate ourselves concerning our heart, mind, and body.





Awards and Recognitions

On the occasion of the 35th Statehood Day of Arunachal Pradesh, our founder and director, Gen Lobsang Phuntsok la was conferred a state gold medal and award for meritorious service by His Excellency the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh Brig. (Dr.) B.D. Mishra (Retd.).

During this visit, the Admin team had the opportunity to meet with the Chief Minister (the head of the state government) and the Chief Secretary (the highest ranking administrative official in the state government), both of whom have expressed a keen interest in supporting our growth initiatives.

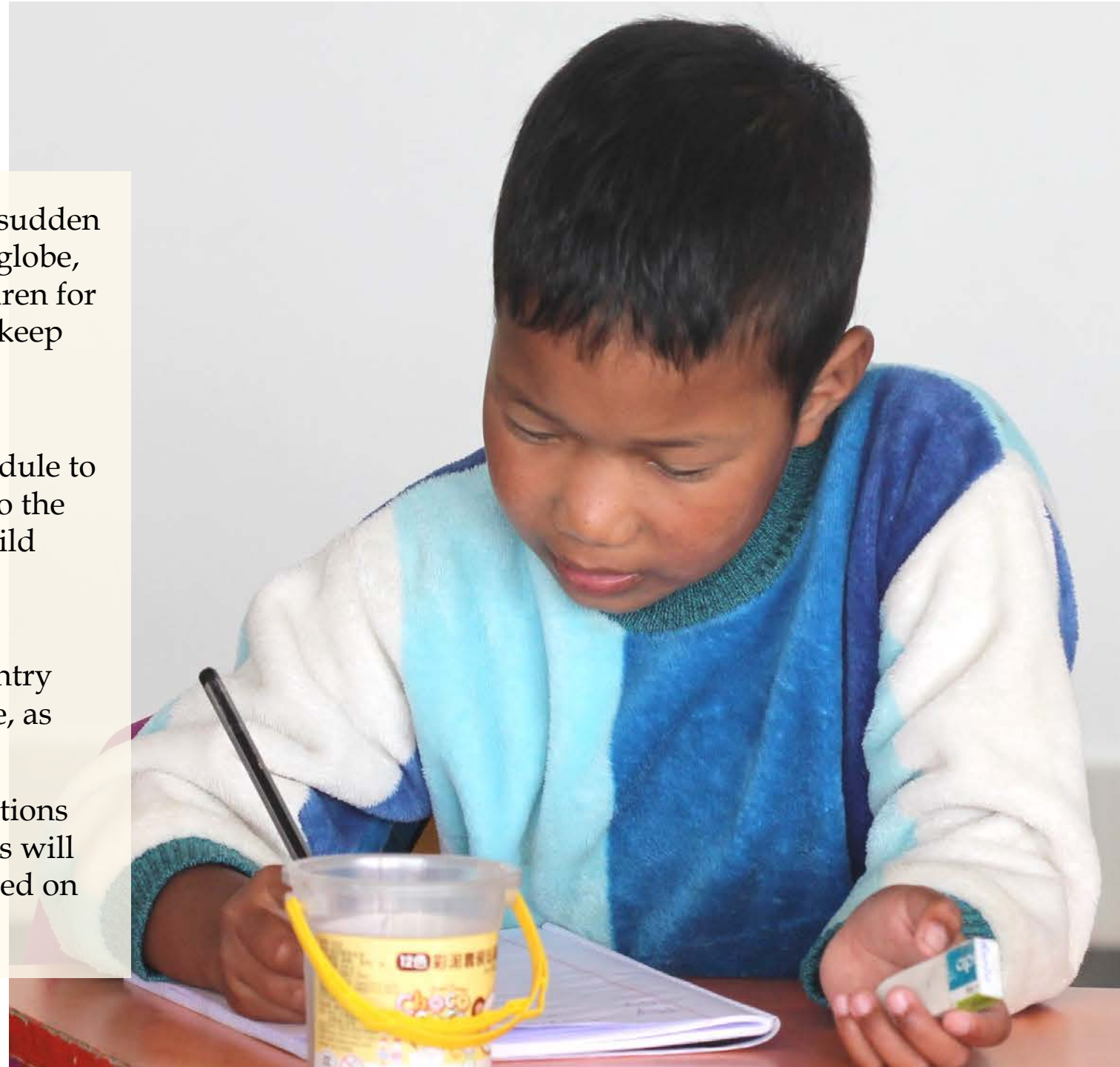
Education

While pandemic brought significant challenges and sudden transitions for educational communities around the globe, we were able to conduct regular classes for our children for most of the lockdown because we were fortunate to keep them with us.

With all of the teachers and children on campus throughout the pandemic, we revised our daily schedule to allow our children to participate in projects related to the pandemic, sustainability, etc. while helping them build academic skills in their weaker subjects.

Our teachers were able to cover more of the syllabus compared to other schools in the region and the country who had to depend on online classes, where possible, as school were closed for most of 2020.

The teachers also conducted the half-yearly examinations for the children as planned. The annual examinations will be conducted by the government for high school based on the COVID situation in the country.



Health, Hygiene and Nutrition



The pandemic has focused everyone's attention on healthcare across the globe. To ensure our children's strong immunity to combat the novel Coronavirus, we made several changes to our meal plans:

- We incorporated herbs and immunity-boosting spices, like turmeric, ginger, honey, and jaggery, into our daily meals and snacks.
- We consumed community or locally-grown produce only. We avoided using vegetables from Assam, which has a high concentration of Covid-19 cases.
- We have provided our children and staff members with Ashwagandha and Guduchi, well-known ayurvedic supplements for boosting immunity.

Due to the lockdown imposed across the country, it has been challenging to travel for medical needs. We largely depended on online consultations. Two of our children, Tenzin D. and Tsering C. had to travel to Tezpur for in-person consultations with ophthalmologists. We ensured that they traveled while following all necessary precautions. They quarantined for two weeks upon their return.

Organic Farming

Winter was a very bountiful period for our farms. We were able to continue harvesting tomatoes, chilies, cauliflowers, cabbages, beans, onions, etc. for most of the season.

Staff member Sonam and student Shanti have started farming in other areas on campus such as the southern slopes below the cob houses, the area beyond the prayer wheels, etc.

They have planted corn, beans, potatoes, and a lot of other vegetables in these farms for the upcoming year. They have teamed up with the Amalas (housemothers) to plant fruit trees across the campus.

Sonam and Shanti have been producing a lot of high-quality vermicompost from our vermicompost pits which is used for our farms and sold in the region as well.



Cultural Events

The preservation of local indigenous culture and cross-cultural immersion are key aspects of our philosophy and education.

Despite the uncertainties and challenges brought forth by the lockdown, we were able to come together as a community to celebrate several cultural and other significant events including Saka-dawa (Buddha Jayanti), His Holiness' Birthday, Vishwakarma Puja, Diwali, Christmas, Losar, Holi, etc.

The staff made a conscious effort to describe the purpose and significance of the traditions followed in the festivals.



Additions and Departures

This year, we were joined by four new teachers and a new Community member, Susan, who married our High School Science teacher, Shalom.



Shreya

High School English



Pradipti

High School History
High School Pol Science



Chesta

High School Mathematics
Middle School Science



Padmini

Elementary School



Susan

Volunteer
(Gap Year Program)

We also bid adieu to two beloved community members: Saurabh (Administrative Coordinator) and Sunil (High School Economics). Both continue to be committed supporters and ambassadors for Jhamtse Gatsal where most needed.

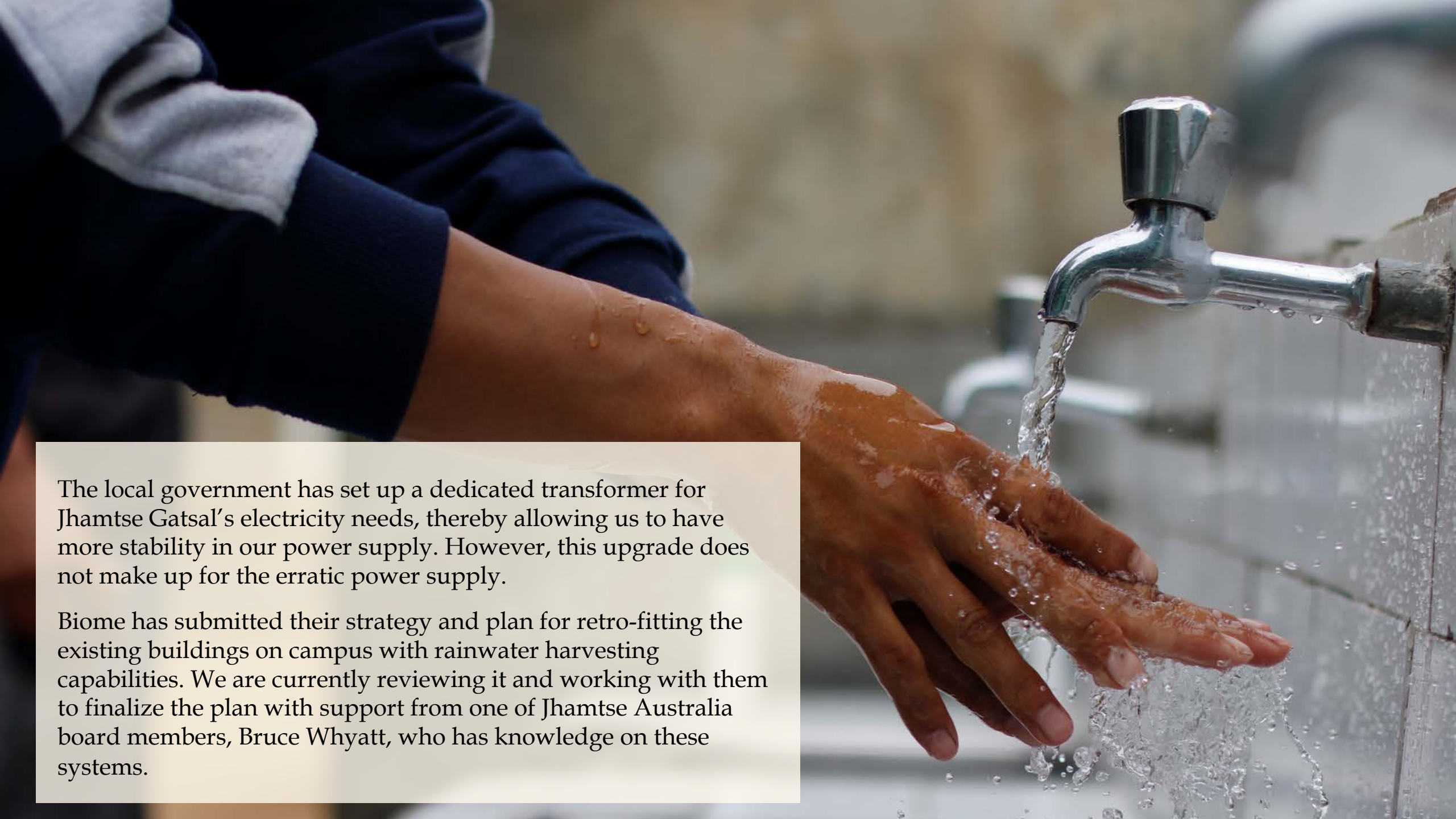




Campus Facilities and Infrastructure

In keeping with our philosophy, which is focused on educating the heart, mind and body, we purchased a series of books for our graduating students, including the works of Mahatma Gandhi, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and other great thinkers. Genla has been holding discussion sessions with the graduating children on excerpts of these books to develop their depth of thinking and analytical skills as part of *Karmayaan* and Gap Year programs.

To keep our children active and fit, we purchased some sports equipment, like a basketball hoop and a cricket set. Our children have been working very hard with their respective coaches to excel in different sports like soccer, cricket, badminton, table tennis, etc.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands being washed under a running faucet. The water is clear and splashing. The person is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt with white cuffs. The background is blurred, showing other faucets in a public restroom.

The local government has set up a dedicated transformer for Jhamtse Gatsal's electricity needs, thereby allowing us to have more stability in our power supply. However, this upgrade does not make up for the erratic power supply.

Biome has submitted their strategy and plan for retro-fitting the existing buildings on campus with rainwater harvesting capabilities. We are currently reviewing it and working with them to finalize the plan with support from one of Jhamtse Australia board members, Bruce Whyatt, who has knowledge on these systems.

Construction of Family House 2



The family house construction has progressed significantly since the lockdown protocols eased in India. The laborers have been working very hard under our construction manager, Dorjee Lama's capable guidance.

High degree of isolation and safety protocols have been maintained to keep a safe distance between the workers from outside and community members. Lockdown protocols apply to the laborers as well who are provided food rations from the community kitchen to curtail their movement and interaction with outsiders.

- Tiling work has been completed in the top four floors of the building.
- Internal plumbing and electrical work is done on all six floors.
- Windows have been fitted in all six floors
- *Pema Choetse* painting has been completed for the top floor. It is in progress for the remaining floors.
- Iron railing has been fixed on all six floors of the building.



The only areas where work is remaining is painting, installation of bathroom fixtures like faucets, showers etc., fixing of wooden railings for staircase and installation of cupboards. We feel that we are on track for completion of the family house by the end of summer.

Work is progressing at a steady pace on the lower floors too. We are prioritizing completion of the top floors so that the children can move in soon!



THANK YOU!