



HIPS - Charity Organisation

Weija, Ghana

Information Letter Nr. 11

August 2007

Dear Friends and Sponsors

Some time has gone by since I last visited Ghana in April, but before I will be in Africa again I would like to summarise what has happened at my last trip and what's new in the meantime.

On the same day I arrived in Accra I already met with Mr. Marius de Bruyn, the representative of our new generous, private sponsor from Switzerland. His task was to get a personal impression about the HIPS kindergarten and school in Weija. Therefore we took quite some time to visit all of the area and talk to the people on side and answer his questions by the HIPS Board. Also the children gave him a typical Ghanaian warm welcome with songs and dances. He was quite taken by all he saw and promises me to support our project.



We also visited the village of Weija, so that he could get a good overlook how the children and their families live. When he saw, how many of those families do not have a job – the only possibility for example for some of the women is to work under heat and rain in a quarry and cut stones in small peaces for the road construction – he started a discussion about possibilities to improve the quality of life for the people at Weija. Some interesting ideas came up. We will see if there is a chance to work on some of them.

Now in early June I became the longed for firm answer that our project – a three classroom building - will be sponsored and a few days later already the money arrived on the HIPS account.

You might assume how enthusiastic I was that we now will be able to have for each of our 6 school classes a separate classroom available very soon. Those classes which have been given lessons to at the outside can now be taught under acceptable conditions at all weather conditions.

All of us thank the undisclosed sponsor very, very much for his generous engagement.

When Mr. de Bruyn had left, I had to start together with the chief of Weija - who makes sure that only the very poor will be selected - and the headmaster of our school to interview the 80 families, which have asked for an admission of their children to the kindergarten. We selected 30 new children, an always difficult and sometimes sad experience for everybody.





The newly selected had also to undertake a first short medical check by Dr. Alla before they have to show up at her hospital for blood and urine tests. There they will also get any missing vaccinations.

All of them, who qualified are now awaiting anxiously the start of the kindergarten term early September. From that day on, we than will have overcome the first major boarder - 101 children will be educated and looked for by HIPS from that time on!

We also have been successful to find a Montessori teacher, who has been educated in Germany, to train our teachers this special method of education.

He works for a school in the North of Ghana, but he promised to come during the Easter vacations for a first 2 week training session. The session has been a big success and brought great enthusiasm to everybody. In the meantime succeeding training sessions have taken place and during the winter holidays another special training will be held.

The cost for all of this is quite high, but I think that we will provide the children by this method with an education, which teaches them more thinking on their own, than the normal face to face methodology. This way of continues repeating of the taught seems not to improve the necessary own intellectual actions. We will see if and how successful we are.



Now some interesting and remarkable support actions for our HIPS Organisation:

A Christmas Bazaar has been held again at the Schiller primary school in Göppingen / Germany, which brought the almost unbelievable amount of 1340 € for HIPS. We agreed on, that the funds will be used for some of the necessary material, which will be needed for the Montessori education. A part of that we can buy in Ghana, the rest I will take along on my next trip.

I hereby thank the school very much for the repeated willingness to support HIPS.

Since we were lucky to be able to get some container space when a German Organisation will be sending a container to Ghana early August, actions in Stuttgart, Meschede, and Losone/ Switzerland were held to collect clothing, shoes, school material, bikes and other usable things for the HIPS children. More than 50 boxes could be filled and send to Ghana early August. Many children will get things, of which they had never even dreamed of.

To my especially great joy it has been possible to find a group of Swiss people, which will support HIPS by a regular monthly grant. This group (Circle) of 20 families founded an association in July, which took the obligation to use the monthly subscription fee of each member to donate it as a sum total to HIPS.

You probably can believe how happy I was about this remarkable decision. This is a great method not only to support HIPS, but also to help us with a firm monthly amount of money to cover our ongoing monthly payments. In addition to that the bundled fees will give a very effective help and great safety to HIPS, since the support for the development of HIPS was promised for at least the next 5 to 10 years.



I very, very much thank the Circle members and hope that others might join in into this great idea and find a similar way to put their support to HIPS in a similar very helpful structure. This would support our Organisation tremendously for the safety of its future.

But now back to the daily actions at my visit.

The kindergarten and school are developing fine. The headmaster delivers a monthly report, so that all of the members of the board can see, what is going on at Weija and react immediately if help is needed.

Our children are healthy and the regular food and the 3 times per week treatment of all of the children with vitamins and minerals are surly supporting this situation. I have just read, that trough a major worldwide survey it was proved evidence, that a regular, daily supply of warm food led to a significant improvement of the educational objectives. A result which especially at HIPS, where the children are coming from very underprivileged families with now money to feed their children right, will show it effectiveness.

All of that naturally needs money. Since our sponsorship fee has been stable for quite some while and the development of cost in Ghana has – as we see it in Europe during the last years –been quite similar, the latest currency reform will probably also not help – again as we experienced in the Euro Zone – and last but not least the increasement of the mentioned amount of 30 children leads to the necessity of adjusting the sponsorship fee to that development.

If we want to keep the standard of our food and follow the general development of the salary for the teachers – which we have to do – we will have to increase the annual sponsorship fee by 60 € to than 300 €. For our Swiss sponsors this will mean an adjustment of the fee by 85 CHF to annual 470 CHF. All of those who will be able to follow that development I thank very much already today.

Again this year Birgit Strehler visited us in Ghana and has been a great help to me. She brought some letters along from a few children of her friends, which they had written to some HIPS children. By this a development has started, where children from Ghana and Germany getting into a personal contact by telling each other about their life and their happenings. She also brought some clothing and most of all some medicaments, which she had gotten from a lady in Stuttgart, which is running a pharmacy.



Before the children left for Easter vacation we had a party, which already has developed to a regular habit when I'm in Ghana. Games, dances, popcorn, cookies and minerals were the highlights and everybody was happy again about this diversion of the regular schooldays.

This time during my visit I had the chance to meet with the lady director of "GOVA – Ghana Operations Volunteer Abroad". Together we visited the Weija Kindergarten and school. She was enthusiastic about what she has seen, especially about the brought spec of teaching material and the small classes. If the existing information about the general situation at the schools in Africa is right, the normal amount of children in a class is somewhere between 50 and 100. Quite similar is the situation at the State school across the road.



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We quite substantially fall short of those numbers. Not only because we do not have the funds to educate more children, but also because under the family background of our children, we feel, that they need much more support and care than children from the so called "normal" families.

With the impression of her visit, the lady from GOVA promised me to send us volunteers in the future if we can somehow overcome the housing problem. A difficult task, as long as we are not able to house them on our compound. It would be wonderful if we found a solution, since it has been always a very good experience for the children, their parents and the teachers to learn from the European or North - American youngsters directly about the life outside Africa



During my stay in Ghana we had two strong storms were also two big trees at our area were uprooted. One of them even fell on the roof of the Kindergarten building, fortunately without making to much of a damage. The

tree destroyed a greater part of our fence, which had to be fixed immediately, so that nothing of our equipment can be stolen easily. Also some of the electric pools have to be renewed, all of this unneeded expenses, but unavoidable.

So far for today about my visit and what has happened in the meantime.

My tasks at the next scheduled visit in September/ October will be to try again to find a way for a hepatitis vaccination of everybody at the kindergarten and school.

I also like to take a little girl, which suffers under a substantial eye problem, to a hospital. This is situated almost three hours away from Weija, and a German Doctor I know works there for a few weeks each time over the last 5 to 6 years. He promised me to evaluate, if the girl can be operated. If this should be possible, HIPS will take care of the cost and by this give her a good chance to live a normal life afterwards.

With my best wishes for the coming weeks and month I say goodbye
I'll be back with news after my next visit to Ghana.

Sincerely
Yours

Brigitte Honsel

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Each child is a sign of hope for our world

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