



HIPS – Charity Organisation Weija, Ghana

Information Letter Nr. 10

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Dear Friends and Sponsors,

I hope you had a wonderful Christmas time and a healthy transition into 2007.

Today I would like to inform you briefly about my last visit to Ghana in November/ December of last year.

All the children of the kindergarten and school were awaiting me with great joy, when I came to Weija early in the morning the day after my arrival. I can tell you that all of them are healthy and our little botanic garden around the buildings, showing plants from the different areas of Ghana, and living on the constant help of Paul, is doing well and is embellishing the HIPS side so nice, that some people are already talking about the most beautiful primary school and kindergarten in Ghana. This compliment is naturally challenging us.

Starting in September our new headmaster Mr. Ephson is getting more and more acquainted and I was happy to meet him the first time. He is well qualified and is teaching class 6 aside being responsible of all organisational work for the growing HIPS project in Weija.

Since some of the kindergarten kids are already mature enough to start school, but there is no room and teacher jet, I tried to be a teacher for a few weeks using a part of the kindergarten as classroom. To be honest, that is not as easy as it looks, especially since the kids are in no way used to the necessary discipline at home and a not educated teacher as myself has to learn in the first place to tame the little " wild horses ".After the Christmas holidays luckily the new teacher starts, so that those kids will be getting the right treatment for their coming school - start after the summer vacation.

On the last days of November we went on our big annual excursion with all the children, some of their parents, the teachers and staff, as well as Paul and his son Daniel, who took care of the never ending drum sound everybody seems to need over there. Already the day before the staff was working on the food and drinks for everybody, so that, when we started early in the morning at 6 o'clock the next day, everything was ready. Naturally at this day nobody was late, all of the children were still very tired but eager to see, what the day will show us.

This year we were happy, that we did not have to pay for the bus and its driver, since our always gracious sponsor Ballast Nedam was kind enough to lend us one of its busses for the journey. So with a lot of noise, singing and drumming, we started in the direction of Cape Coast, with our first destination being **KAKUM National Park** where we arrived after about 3 ½ hours .At first we had a tour through the museum, where we were informed by our guide about the specialities of this National Park with its variety of all the different animals living in the Ghanaian jungle.

Then we could walk from tree to tree through the park on 7 suspension bridges made out of ropes, 15 meters above the jungle ground. Some of the kids were very afraid (you can see some of that on the photo),





but most of them finally dared to walk on, which surely brought them an unforgettable experience. Back to the visitor centre everybody rushed to the food and the so much loved “minerals” (Coke, Sprite; Fanta etc.)



From there we moved on to **Hans Cottage**. There in a little private lake about 150 crocodiles are living. Courageously Paul lured the beasts with some chicken baste out of the water, so that all of the kids could see the animals in their total size. This also was a special experience to the children, since even if crocodiles are native to Ghana, most of them will never see them in nature.

After a short pause, where “minerals” have been the needed help to get the kids over the day, we went on to **ELMINA** to visit the famous **St. George's Castle**. The castle, directly situated on the ocean, has been built 1482 by the Portuguese. Captured by the Dutch in 1637 the castle was expanded to keep those people imprisoned, whom they wanted to sell as slaves to the slave ships, sailing majorly to the new world. We had a very extensive guided tour, where even the little children were competently informed about a very dark period in the life of their forefathers. Naturally all the children and even the adults, where most of them also not have been at this place before, were deeply impressed.

After this third stage of our trip, we drove back to Weija, using our visit in this part of Ghana to buy some of its so famous pineapples and take them along for the next day's lunch. Believe it or not, even after almost 10 hours on the road, everybody was singing and the drums were beaten until we reached Weija at about 8 p.m.

The children of class 6 were asked to write down a report about that day. In the following I would like to present to you just a short example what they have been putting on paper:

“ On Monday 27th of November we went to an excursion to Cape Coast. We left here at 6:00 a.m. prompt. On the way going we sang and danced. We all were very happy. The first place we went is called Kakum National Park. We went to walk on the seven canopy walk ways. After that, we went on to Hans Cottage. Here we saw crocodiles swimming in the pond and we took pictures of some of them. Then on the way to Elmina we saw the university of Cape Coast. At the castle we had a teacher to teach us more about the history of that place. He took us to the slave cell and the gate of no return, where our forefathers passed to some parts of the world. I liked the journey because all the places are nice and beautiful and we learned a lot from the trip.”

A few days later the new headmaster and I had an audience with the chief of Weija. We talked about the kindergarten and school, its planned development and the chief once again assured us of his help and the full support of the people from Weija. We asked him, if he could be present at the next parents and teachers meeting (PTA – meeting) to again explain to the parents, that cleanliness, order and personal engagement of the parents for the needs of the kindergarten and school, as well as giving the children the necessary support to get to school in time and regularly, is needed to keep the project successful.

Also the new Assembly man was present. He is in charge of the matters of the village at the political level. He offered his help for all those actions, where his closer contacts to the governmental layers could be useful.



At a meeting with the German Ambassador Mr. Linder I met an Ethiopian doctor who has been educated in Germany. This very kind and charming lady offered me her help to come in March, at my next visit, to Weija to give the children some sex education (Aids, but also basic information for now the puberty experiencing children, is of quite some value in this growing African country). She also promised me, that she would look for a vaccination of the children against jaundice, tetanus and polio. I was very grateful for this unexpected support of our project and thanked her very much.

Also our very nice and engaged Dr. Mrs. Alla came to Weija again to one of her regular checks of all the children. I was especially happy to hear, that through her help at the last minute, one of our children, which suffered very hard under malaria, could be preserved from a sure death. God bless her.

As you can see on the picture I was able to equip the school soccer team with a tricots, showing the logo and the name of our School on the back. Now they can compete properly dressed at the soccer games against the other schools of the area. The photo shows, that everybody was very proud about those very good looking new shirts.



I also had the possibility to meet with the Swiss Ambassador Mr. Zubler. At his residence I could inform him about the newest developments of the HIPS Charity Organisation, which had happened since his visit to Weija at the inauguration of our last school building. He ensured me again, that the embassy will do whatever it can to support our private project also in the future.

At the last week of my time in Ghana Birgit Strehler again visited our project. At her 40th birthday in August she waived, as others have also done in the past, any presents for the good of HIPS. A quite remarkable sum of 3.100 Euros was collected. A part of that money as well as the money which was collected by the Rotary Club of Meschede/ Warstein through a beneficiary Concert, was invested into new play yard equipment. Many thanks to her and all the other donators.



Early December the equipment was installed during the PTA meeting. The chief of Weija, the Queen mother of the village, the Assembly man and the stool father attended this special occasion. We extended this inauguration into a Christmas party, since the Christmas holidays started a few days later. Almost everybody never had attended a party of this kind, so they enjoyed it very much.

At my birthday, which came up during my stay in Ghana, I could welcome some local people, which have been of great help to HIPS and me over the years. The really most wonderful present I can think of, was the promise of Mr. Jeffrey Pinkney, the leading manager of Ballast Nedam Ghana and a great friend of our project, to build another schoolhouse for two classes for HIPS and an additional building for assemblies and the daily lunch, which today has to be taken in the classrooms or outside, depending on the weather. I thanked him very cordially for this once more gracious support for HIPS. Without him and his company we would never be there, where we are.



An additional very big surprise I could go through shortly before I left to Ghana, was the generosity of a private Swiss sponsor, who promised to me the necessary funds for a three classroom school building, by which after its installation and the new donation of Ballast Nedam Ghana, all the necessary class rooms should be in place for our planed 9 classes school. So we just need one more building for trainees and the headmaster, since the surrounding area does not furnish us the needed housing we need to attract good people to Weija and our HIPS project.

In the final stage, when all 9 classes are in place, about 150 children will be educated at HIPS.

An amount which is almost double the size of today.

I hope that we will be able to collect the necessary funds to develop the project to that point and than keep it running for the future. Any kind of help is appreciated.

To document what is possible, let me present to you some new private initiatives:

A young artist from the Tessin/ Switzerland Mr. Marco Verzasconi, last year donated a portion of the money he got paid for one of his work of art to go to HIPS. Many thanks to him for this great idea and his ongoing engagement.



A wonderful printed T – shirt has been designed by a Tessin painter. She donated a part of her collection to HIPS. Also many thanks to her.

Max Knorpp, ten years of age, has taken a sponsorship. The money for that he is earning on different service jobs in his family. A first letter, widely equipped by photos, Birgit brought to Weija.

One of our boys (John) gave her a direct answer to take to Germany.

John is very proud that he now got a friend in Germany.

Some donations in the form of different articles of clothing I was able to take along this time. A very big Hallo I could experience, when I distributed the clothing to the children of the kindergarten and school.

To all the donators many thanks for their support.



That's all for this time. I will be back with fresh news after my next visit to Ghana in March/ April this year.

I thank all of you for your help. The children of HIPS are very thankful to go through their live with your support.

Yours

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