

# Report of Agnes Blümel

## Volunteer at Gsk,

### 2. September to 28. September 2008

#### **Tasks**

##### ***Teaching***

I taught the elementary pupils every afternoon from Tuesday to Friday for 3 weeks.

In mathematics we practised combining the 4 basic types of calculation and recognizing of logical patterns. In English we exercised the structure of a sentence, especially the noun, verb and adjective. Doing this I laid the stress upon spelling and reading.

I also prepared lessons for the high school pupils for 2 weeks after Albrecht had left. In mathematics we did exercises with negative numbers, prime numbers and fractions, as well as application of different types of equations. Besides the repetition of the past tenses and irregular verbs we practised spelling and understanding by means of dictations.

Out of these lessons I tried to help the children with their questions in particular themes in school, e.g. some mathematical problems or installing Java.

##### ***German Doctors***

For me that was one of the most important activities. I went there with 1 to 7 children, depending on the capacities with one of the mothers in centre, with the social worker or on my own.

Most of the children have now been to the German Doctors at least once. They got a record there, had a weight check, a medical check up and the first tetanus immunization.

Children with ache or a specific suspicion had a medical or dental treatment with a medical follow up or a tuberculosis check.

For detailed information see the word document "German Doctors", where you can also find all appointments for following check ups.

##### ***Jail***

The first time I companied Albrecht and Minda to the youths in jail to talk and pray. The second time I made some physical education with the boys. We were not allowed to get in for my last time because of a festival in Lumbia lasting the whole week. But we could give them the soap and the brought used clothes.

##### ***Visiting school and families***

I went to the school with the social worker to talk to some teachers to get informed about the children's progresses, behaviour and presence. They were open, friendly and helpful. The school is very supportive to the project.

The social worker also brought me to the houses and families of some children to get an impression how they live and to say hello. All visited families received us warm-heartedly and courteously.

##### ***Promotion material***

Minda, Stefan and I planned to create a new flyer for German donators. I searched through many CDs and folders to get an impression about existing material and pictures. In view of lack of time we agreed that I am going to continue this job in Germany after consulting Stefan.

##### ***Further activities***

In preparations for the accreditation I helped in decorating.

On Saturdays I took part in the bible study, went once to the sport centre and twice to the park at the capitol.

Three Sundays I companied Minda and some of the children the UCCP church. The hearted masses were very children-friendly.

I had talks with Minda and thoughts about the calendar 2009, changes, receiving donations and possible development. Further we discussed my plans helping GsK from Germany.

## **Personal impressions**

In the first days I was flooded by many foreign impressions; attitudes, way of living, culture, climate and language were absolutely new to me. The first day at the centre I met many smiling faces and I tried to remember their names and some of the expressions they taught me. Nevertheless I took the children to my heart from this first moment. There were some moments with the children I will never forget, some words, some facial expressions and to laugh together. Minda, Joy and Astrid were very supportive and helpful and soon I felt quite well and as a member of the GsK family.

I had known most of the programmes before I had come. Still I think they are good and convincing. At the beginning I was wondering about saving money per child (e.g. fewer sweets) to be able to feed and support more children. Soon I realized that the money is used as efficient as possible and no peso is wasted. The project cares about the personality of every child and meets the real needs of the children. Besides food these are mental basic needs like respect, love, interest, educational support and feeling of security in a family.

Some of the mothers are working at the centre by turns for a week. I regard this as very useful. It strengthens the feeling of belonging together and they can "give" a little bit back for what their children in the project are receiving.

I want to stress positively the reintegration and communication with the families. That is the only way to ensure a long-term successful development of the children. In few cases the family life is, because of different reasons, untenable and causes contra-productive development and/or pain to their children, both physically and mentally. I approve that in these cases there are thoughts about alternatives like adoption (license necessary?) or transfer to a residential.

I had the impression that all the stuff (salaried and voluntary) like their job and do it wholeheartedly. I was very impressed by Mindas hearted and self-sacrificing way to care for "her" children. She is doing a miraculous round-the-clock job.

One moment was a great honour to me: I was allowed to take part in the board meeting one Saturday. The members discussed very openly the latest developments. It was very interesting and I was happy that my opinion and impressions also were of importance. That was the moment Minda asked me to become a member and I agreed proudly.

My stay lasted 4 weeks, actually too short. After this time I started to be familiar to the workflows, was able to orientate in the city and nearly knew all the children's names and some of the backgrounds. I am afraid, that it wasn't able to stay longer this time, but it gave me power and motivation to work for this project in Germany and I will try to organise a longer stay in 2009 or 2010.

Independent of the shortness of my life with GsK it was so hard to say goodbye. Many letters and blessings from the children plucked my heartstrings.

This project and my stay gave me a reality check for the essential and I am thankful for this unaffordable and everlasting experience. Thank you to all the persons afforded my sojourn, to Minda as well as to all the stuff and to the children; for their love, their confidence and their outspoken and hearted behaviour towards me.

## **Financing**

### ***Donations***

Minda and I agree that the model of sponsoring one specific child is disputed to the basic idea of the project. I am wondering about the question how the children without sponsors feel and whether this random unfairness is avoidable. All children should receive the same benefits. Once I have met them all, it would be impossible to choose exactly one child.

A further problem with sponsorship is the fact, that some children (have to) leave the project. To inform the particular sponsor about this could harm the trust in the project.

But I understand that this way to win donators is the most effective and emotive one, because the sponsor gets a long-term personal relationship.

I am aware of the lack of money and the need to collect it as promptly as possible.

In consideration of these facts I suggest a combination, so that the donator can easily choose a sponsorship or an open donation.

The request to the sponsors to increase the amount of 200% could have seemed daunting. A progressive increase would have been more believable given that prices hardly rise so dramatically at once. Besides the actually extreme rise in prices, however, a change in concept militates in favour of this step. 100 Euro cover the expenses for school needs, 300 Euro also break even all direct daily expenditures of one child like food, clothes, medicine and a little amount of pocket money. Every sponsor who cannot or doesn't want to increase the amount to 300 Euro maintains his sponsorship of his child with his individual sum.

There was the idea to ask for project specific donations. Once (or twice) a year the donators are getting informed about a particular necessary project with its cash requirements. These projects could be: milk for one year, a vehicle to save transport costs, a medical program or school uniforms or equipment.

So the donator knows exactly what happens with the money. I do not know if donators want to be faced so detailed information, so this could only be a try in the first step.

I am quite sure, that there is consensus on the effort to obtain companies as donators to receive higher (and eventually continuous) amounts of money. In my opinion primarily small-scale and middle-sized companies should be approached (big companies usually donate to major and long-famous institutions). So the communication can happen on a personal level and the company can profile to customers as social orientated with an individual project that shows direct success.

But still the most money will be given by private donators.

### ***Cost cutting***

The annual report, which is posted to the donators once a year, is from my point of view dispensable. All persons I asked are not interested in so detailed information. My suggestion is to ask the people if they are interested in the next annual report and, if possible, to send it by email.

The newsletter and calendar are nice gestures and I am sure most of the project's friends are happy about these information and impressions. But in the course of cost cutting one could take into consideration to ask people for interest first.

### ***Promotion***

I set myself the target to make the project and circumstances more public. I try to share my experiences with many interested people and will write a short emotional report for German donators. If there is an interest in organising an information event in the near future to discuss latest developments and the financing problem, I would love to show some pictures and to report about my stay for some minutes. I don't know if events like this took place and are crowned with success.

Independent from activities like these I try to get in contact with different companies, some on a personal relationship and some with the help of my university, to call attention and to get them involved with the project.