

SPRING  
2024



SHANTI LEPRAHILFE  
DORTMUND E.V.

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# NEWSLETTER

ISSUED SPRING 2024

## THE CONQUEST

**A CHINESE EMPEROR PLANNED  
CONQUERING THE LAND OF HIS ENEMIES  
DESTROYING THEM ALL.**

**A LITTLE WHILE LATER, HOWEVER,  
PEOPLE SAW HIM DINE AND  
LAUGH WITH HIS ENEMIES.**

**"DID YOU NOT INTEND TO  
DESTROY YOUR ENEMIES?"  
THEY ASKED IN SURPRISE.**

**THE EMPEROR REPLIED:  
"I ACTUALLY DESTROYED THEM -  
I MADE THEM MY FRIENDS!"**

*FROM CHINA*

### **DEAR FRIENDS OF THE SHANTI-FAMILY,**

My last visit to Nepal was some weeks ago. A long time, but it was a very intense stay which is still alive in me. I am burning to tell you about it!

Misery is growing everywhere in Nepal, everyone can see it. More and more people come to Shanti for help. We had the feeling of being overwhelmed sometimes. But then I thought: we are not alone - there are many people on our side, strengthening

our enthusiasm, making us endure all this. Again and again, we will be able to fight against the incredible wave of injustice, caste arrogance and despair. I saw the image of a rowing boat which we propel forward in those stormy times, together with you - in the end, we will be safe after the tempest...

### **CUTS IN THE HEALTH SYSTEM**

The stormy weather has actually bad influences in the health sector. As I told you some time ago, the



government has cut the health budget by 35% for this year. The impact is very severe now, hitting the poor in the most unbelievable way.

There is a big hospital in Kathmandu, the Bir Hospital under state control. It is the only hospital where the poor can be treated for free. It had 900 beds once. The government dismissed 276 nurses - so that 360 of the beds stay empty! In the emergency room, three patients share one single bed. All other clinics are privately managed and cost too much.

These are hard times for people in need, as they come here from all over the country, from far away. If nobody from their family can pay for a private hospital - they are taken back - without treatment - without any prospects of help - and still ill.

### HEALTH CAMPS

We from Shanti therefore try to use all our efforts to provide medical care for more and more people. We mainly encounter ill people in our medical camps. In the brick factory, for example, one single day brought 800 to us seeking health. Perhaps you remember that we noticed the terrible conditions there for the first time a few years ago. We have been visiting the factory regularly since then. We are about one hour's drive from it.

All those people patiently stood in line for hours, waiting for us and our help. Our staff gave them water during the time they waited, providing the children with our nutrition mush.

Seriously ill persons are taken to Kathmandu by our team immediately, Shanti paying the necessary treatment costs.

We are immensely touched by the history of every single person in the camps. But one of them was one of the worst, that of little Denissa.

### DENISSA

My German family doctor who spends some of her time with us for a few weeks, diagnosed the two-year old living in the neighbouring slum with a severe pneumonia. She ought to be taken to hospital on the spot. Then Denissa was suddenly not found any more, in a crowd of 500 people... we looked for her everywhere, but without success.

The next day, a bigger child remembered a hut in which the child lived with her father, a drunkard. The mother had killed herself when Denissa was seven months old. We were happy to really find her there in the cabin.

Kopita, our very clever nurse, took the child to the hospital immediately. The doctors reprimanded her, why did she bring the child so late? But to our horror, the father refused to agree to the child's stay in the hospital.

The most appalling thing was however the reason why he wanted to take her with him. From the time he was alone with the child he lent her to beggars for about 1.50 euros a day. He needed the money for alcohol, and Denissa would be the one to earn it for him, so to speak! The tiny child crawling about in the dirt or the road would trigger pity, that was the plan. People would throw more money into the beggars' bowls.

Her lungs were massively damaged by the dust and car exhausts in the streets. We finally found a local politician who had enough influence to have the child who was seriously ill admitted to the intensive care unit at the children's hospital.

We have paid 1,750 euros (up to now) for the treatment - poor people could never raise so much money - when they earn an average of 100 euros per month!



The next thing we worry about is that Denissa requires further treatment on a cardiology ward, as her little heart is too big, it has a big hole, and one heart valve is deficient. Open heart surgery is necessary. We want to do everything for her that is necessary and possible, as we do for any child at Shanti.

What an unbelievable gift it is to be able to help children in such a manner - thanks to your great support, dear friends of Shanti!

#### DOCTORS FROM AMERICA

Another gift was the visit of a team of specialists from America. This story started rather depressingly: Uttam, a member of the presidency of Shanti Nepal had to give training lessons in human rights in regions near the Chinese border, which is far away. He is a lecturer at Kathmandu university.

He met six children who were severely disabled due to accidents or congenital defects. On the telephone, I sensed that he was deeply shaken by their suffering. The disorders were difficult enough. But he was bitterly disappointed that their parents themselves blamed them for this misery! They accused them of having a bad karma – the Gods punished them with the flaws! This is why their parents and the whole village despised these poor children!

I asked Uttam, of course, to bring the six to Kathmandu as we would have chances of helping them here. We actually had no more room at Shanti, but our old men felt so much pity with the children when they heard of the problem that they moved together and let them have their room.

What is more: the overwhelming gift: By accident (?) we heard that a US team of specialists were in Kathmandu to operate children! We contacted

them immediately, and professor Herzenberg, a celebrity in the US, cared for the children (his great-great-grandfather is from Germany).

It happened that all six children could undergo surgery - for free! They gave them a quite new quality of life, shortly before their return journey. After the successful surgery, the children returned to Shanti, where they are being cared for and nourished.

They said to their accompanying villagers: "We are being very well cared for here. We would love to stay here!" The plan is for them to stay here for one year, because they need some more surgery following up their operations.

#### ELISMA

In the middle of all the depressing problems, one event stood out: I was able to celebrate my 80th birthday among the Shanti family! As I am used to travelling frequently by plane, I always have extra luggage. This time I had applied for the transport of a second-hand electrical wheelchair which Heiko had found on the internet. It would be for Elisma who suffers from progressive muscular atrophy and can only walk a few steps with great effort. She has been living with Shanti since her 6th year of age and is 15 now. Her parents are truly poor. They live in their village and care for Elisma's brother who has the same congenital disease. Elisma is very brave and a good pupil. She attends school, and her friends pushed her there till now.

On my birthday, the entire Shanti family was gathered together in the courtyard between the houses. Heiko put the wheelchair in front of her, helped her to get into it, and explained which levers she had to use. Can you imagine her shining face when she moved independently, on her own into the clinic yard? No present could be better for me than that heart-warming event!





## THE CELEBRATION

The party was as colourful and happy as all parties at Shanti. The small and the older children had rehearsed songs and dances in the music school. They beat the drums, played the flutes and the sarangi, the traditional Nepalese violin.

Our friends from Dwarika's Hotel had given me a huge, rectangular cream cake, adorned in the most splendid way with colourful pictures of elephants, peacocks and butterflies. Three pastry-cooks had worked for two days to make it. Everybody got a piece – which was no bigger than a chocolate candy ...

For the hunger, Lucia, our happy and hard-working volunteer, had made dough of 140 eggs and 14 kilograms of flour, mixed with litho. She baked 400 waffles together with Rabi, the manager of our café. They worked until half-past two in the morning as we have only got two waffle irons (we normally don't need more of these apparatuses...). A scoop of ice-cream on the waffle and chocolate syrup - the child's happiness was perfect!

Two of our babies had the chance of growing up in a first step: The twins who had been brought to us half a year ago, got their first solid food on that day: rice. We had paid their father's journey from their village for that festival, because rice-feeding is a big party in Nepal.

Heiko surprised me with his gift: a supporting wall in the back of our property. He had put a large elephant on the wall, made in Bhaktapur, the potters' village. This wall is going to be provided with name stones of all the donors who have given us a fruit tree!

Like all parties, this one ended with all of us dancing in the inner yard: old and young, patients,

volunteers, guests, Shanti staff – everyone turned round in a relaxed and happy circle.

This time, my luggage also included a veritable plough and spades, besides the wheelchair for Elisma. In the autumn, the agricultural specialist Siegfried Hahn came to see us and he advised us to turn the soil up much heavier than before. We have got two tractors – but they only slice the soil on the surface. Nepal does not know any spades, only hoes. This is why Heiko ordered a sample plough and spade on the internet which happened to be small enough for my military bag.

Heiko was so happy! We could plough deeper with these utensils than with Nepalese ones. He contacted the father of our silversmith apprentice, Dipendra, who belongs to the caste of the untouchable blacksmiths. Heiko asked him to imitate some, by welding iron together. Now we have three of each, Heiko being so glad to have them. They cost us a third of the price paid in Germany, 30 euros per item.

The smith lives in the village of the untouchables which Shanti cares for. After the forging of the prototype, they can produce the items in serial work, and the smith gets more work through this. This is exactly what we intend: We want to free the village from its poverty. Last year, we gave all families fruit trees - they are big enough to bear fruit this year!

## SUNFLOWERS

This year, the villages hope to harvest many sunflowers. Two years ago, Heiko had asked us to send a small paper bag of sunflower seeds, from a variety with many flowers. So our water fountain in the yard was surrounded by 18 strong plants, growing more than three metres high, some of them bearing 20 flowers. The sparrows were happy, and we were amazed to harvest 750 grams of pips!



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This year, we can sow 26 kilograms! We gave the village 5 kilograms. It is our hope to harvest so much that we can enrich the nutrition mush with roasted sunflower seeds. The long-term project is to press our own sunflower oil.

Since the war in Ukraine started, sunflower oil has become too expensive for the poor – Ukraine had been the world's biggest exporter of sunflower oil as you know.

Another project is still continuing: tree planting: 2,000 trees that are 1.50-2 metres high are already being stored, waiting for their plantation at their final sites. As soon as the monsoon starts we can begin with planting.

Now I wish all of you from my heart that you can turn into the sunshine like the sunflowers whenever life casts its shadows on you!

Stay protected everyone!  
Your Marianne Grossspietsch