

SUMMER  
2017



SHANTI LEPAHILFE  
DORTMUND E.V.

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# NEWSLETTER

ISSUED IN JULY 2017

## ALMOST A PRAYER

WE HAVE A ROOF  
AND BREAD IN THE BOX  
AND WATER IN THE HOUSE,  
OH, WHAT A LOVELY PLACE!  
WE ARE WARM  
AND WE HAVE A BED.  
OH GOD, IF JUST EVERYONE HAD ALL THAT!

BY REINER KUNZE

## GREETING BY MARIANNE FREIFRAU VON WEIZSÄCKER

Shanti Leprahilfe Dortmund e.V. was founded by Marianne Grosspietsch 25 years ago, on 15th July 1992. In Nepal, she learned about the suffering of disabled people, severely disabled even, who had to live without any kind of care. Those who lived as outcasts lacked both physical and mental help – a distress that took their vitality away.

Thus, it became important to Mrs. Grosspietsch to not just take care of food, housing and medical attention for the people but also to enable them to develop a sense for their own dignity and find peace despite their distressful life situation.

Shanti means "Peace". Shanti wasn't planned at a desk – it started small before expanding into new areas as needs arose. More than 1000 people are now being cared for in rehabilitation workshops, a school and a kindergarten. Organic vegetables are cultivated on a plot that was for sale close to Kathmandu; those vegetables are for a soup kitchen that serves 600 meals twice a day.

Shanti has its own centre in Kathmandu, financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, including the outpatient department for the poor and a nursing ward with 75 beds.

The severe earthquake in Nepal 2015 and its consequences for the country are an additional challenge for Shanti up to this day.

Financial support is needed since Shanti depends on donations to be able to cope with its tasks.

An old saying goes "Whoever make life easier for just one person shall be dealt with as if he had saved the entire world." (Talmud)

It is with great respect and my best wishes that I assume responsibility for the patronage of the 25th anniversary of Shanti Leprahilfe Dortmund e.V. –

Marianne v. Weizsäcker



DEAR FRIENDS OF THE SHANTI-FAMILY,

I have written the Shanti news for you for the past 25 years. My writing to you today about our silver jubilee fills me with gratitude and joy – I can hardly find suitable words. All of you are our companions – without your philanthropic support, we would have never been able to help so many people over the course of a quarter of a century!

I still recall our modest beginnings: 12 beggars entrusted to our protection. We rented a small two-storey house close to the Pashupati Temple for them. The outpatients department for the poor was downstairs and the patients lived upstairs – there were Krishna Mahji and Kalpana, Gora Singh and Singasan and Hari and Kumari with her daughters, not forgetting those who are no longer with us.

I had a dream back then – the dream of a better world, a more just society in Nepal: despised people, excluded from society and without rights, should find a place in their society – they should be accepted and do their bit for the well-being of their community.

WHERE MY DREAM CAME FROM

This dream or this vision grew inside me during our visits to the Khokana leprosy ghetto in Nepal. That is where our adoptive son Puskal, who was 7 years old at the time, was living in 1975, together with his parents who were suffering from leprosy. We told them every year how their son was progressing and Puskal was able to accompany us for the first time in 1988, so that he could celebrate passing his A-levels with them.

The visit was a nightmare. The misery of the lepers in the ghetto was unbelievable: a dark, cavernous housing. The father was laying on a hard, dirty plank bed, plagued by vermin and blinded by

leprosy. Leprosy was also the reason why both his feet and hands were nothing more but stumps.

The misery of this man impressed itself on me as an image of horror. I was unable to escape from it and I didn't want to accept or suppress it without doing something. I kept asking myself: How would I feel if I was discriminated against because a dreaded illness like leprosy distorted me?

I'm very thankful to live in a country with a functioning health care system, where the general living standard makes us resistant against illnesses that arise out of poverty.

MY VISION

Thus I had a vision: a bright and friendly place for lepers. A place to stay where they aren't outcast, where they don't have to vegetate outside the city under unspeakable circumstances just as animals living in such conditions in Germany would result in action being taken by the animal welfare organisation.

It should become a place where people really are at home. Where they feel secure and accepted, where they realize: They are humans who have dignity just like every other human and the zest for life is not just for healthy people, so: not just "for the others" but also for themselves. It should be a joyous, colourful house and the image of that house was supposed to throw a blanket over the horror scenario of Khokana and other ghettos for people with disabilities.

Today, the place of my dreams exist and we owe that place to you because you let it turn into reality. You, dear Shanti friends, lit the spark that let this dream image arise in me, evolving into a calm, steady flame – a glowing fire where the Shanti family can warm themselves.



Emotional warming but also real: with your help you provide the fire and the food that gets cooked on it for the hungry, for example! And you repeatedly let my motivational spark rekindle when the burden of responsibility and many difficulties threaten to darken my mental state.

Thus with your help we can continue to build the home for outcasts. Shanti has already been home for around 1000 people in the meantime.

Here, where they can live without fear of discrimination, they discover their abilities and become creative co-workers. Or, if they're too sick, they can die in peace, lovingly accompanied – like Bhola, the severely mentally handicapped boy who died peacefully on the 30th of May, surrounded by empathic people who were close to him.

#### OUR CLINIC

Bhola died in our clinic, the "heart" of our institution. It is right at the entrance, colourfully painted and invitingly oval. Because of this, the clinic is also earthquake-proof.

Our Dr. Kumar, our physiotherapist, the laboratory technician and our nurses work here. The treatment is free for the patients – in a country without health insurance and entitlement to health care. Poor families thus hardly fear anything as much as should a family member fall ill. The costs of their treatment drive many people into bitter need.

Therefore we give them the medication for free (see the article by Ursula and Theo Versteegen in this Newsletter). The rooms with 65 beds on the nursing ward are on floors 2 and 3. Chronically sick people, old people and people with disabilities such as paraplegics and stroke patients live there. Children with mental and physical disabilities are also accommodated here. The assumption could be

that a depressed mood prevails. The worries people have who visit for the first time fade away quickly when they hear the often severely disabled children laughing joyfully.

Laughter is usually elicited by caring volunteers, who patiently and imaginatively learn and play with the children.

#### A DREAM CAME TRUE

My dream actually became reality: patients live and work in a place they artistically shaped themselves. A place that is earthquake-proof and multifunctional – opposite the most important temple of the Indian subcontinent, the Pashupati Nath.

The former outcasts live in the middle of healthy people and not forced out from human settlements like they used to be (Christa Schaaf writes more about this in her article "Shanti as a Model Centre").

Never have I dared to hope that Shanti would ever become such a colourful centre with a variety of offers for rehabilitation. I see before me the tailor's shop and the carpenter's workshop, the paper workshop, the weaving mill, the puppet workshop, the silversmith, the briquette manufactory, the plant kindergarten, the soup kitchen...

People with their own stories work in each of these workshops. They are given a chance in life which enables them to use their own talents, to be creative and to make a living themselves.

#### SURAJ

There is, for example, Suraj. The six-year old half-orphan was brought out of a remote village to a wealthy family in Kathmandu by his aunt – as a child slave. The aunt received the promise that in return for Suraj's work in the kitchen he will be sent to school. The family neglected the promise.



When the boy was nine years old, his determined aunt took him back to his home village. There he went to the village school but he learnt very little. Then the aunt heard about Shanti and that children get taught there for free and she brought the boy to us.

Thus Suraj joined the first grade of our Waldorf school at the age of ten. He attended school until the fifth grade (we didn't have a state permission for further classes) and when he had to move to a state school he was allowed to skip a class!

This year he got his School Leaving Certificate. He wants to visit a college but he decided to undergo an apprenticeship as a silversmith with our paraplegic silversmith Kumar parallel to this. The progress Suraj made in just a few months since the beginning of his apprenticeship is impressive! And we are very happy for him about how his training fills him with joy and how much Kumar likes him.

#### **„IN HOW MUCH DISTRESS...“**

The fact that we could come this far to train young people, to feed hundreds of people, to provide medical care for them, to give children a school education, to finance college degree programs – all of this we owe to your loyalty. It always becomes apparent in hard times.

You have encouraged us during the ten grim years of civil war. Your trust made me overcome my fear of bombs which often exploded close to me. Once they destroyed a house I had passed immediately prior to the explosion.

I couldn't leave our wards just because I feared for myself. I was repeatedly kept safe from danger and harm and thus could justify your trust and keep going.

We had to overcome some crises but you encouraged us not to give up.

#### **THE EARTHQUAKE**

We felt particularly supported by you when two violent earthquakes shook Nepal two years ago. My son Heiko and I arrived in Nepal two days prior to the earthquake and I can still feel the quakes and the countless aftershocks, I can still see the images of destruction and chaos, I can still hear the desperate cries of the people.

The following weeks were very busy and emotionally challenging since the level of destruction and the misery only became clear in time: almost 9,000 people died, 22,000 were injured, 600,000 homes and 5,000 schools destroyed. Today, more than two years later, I read in the papers: 85% of the destroyed homes still need to be rebuilt.

We lost our school in Buddhanilkantha as well, the boarding school for boys and the home for children with severe disabilities were destroyed beyond repair. The self-built houses of the patients collapsed and it's a wonder nobody got hurt. The school and children were evacuated to the main centre where everybody had to get closer to each other to make room.

Hearing about your generous donations did us good! They motivated us and gave us the strength we needed during those days and weeks. In the letters following the earthquake, I told you how we fed dry food to the people and how we sent our doctors to the people who were cut-off by landslides.

#### **SINDHOUALCHOWK AND CAMP HOPE**

Shanti was lucky that the main centre remained intact. It was solidly built and didn't even get a crack. Thus it became a shelter especially for the children that lost their homes in Buddhanilkantha. Others were not so lucky. We already told you about the people in the epicentre of the quake, from Sindhupalchowk. They lost



everything during the strongest earthquake shock-waves – their land (they were mountain farmers) and all their belongings.

Thus Heiko administered to many of those people's needs in cooperation with the Dwarikas foundation of Ambika and Sangita Shresta. A camp was built on a soccer field in Kathmandu for 360 people, 20 people lived in one tent – men and women, old and young.

Heiko built a water filtering unit with a PAUL (see article by Dennis Peupelmann) so that the inhabitants had germ-free drinking water which usually only the rich people have in Nepal. He also installed solar thermal energy so that at least the infants and very old people had warm water to wash themselves with. Winter is extremely cold in Kathmandu, Sangita called the camp "Camp Hope" because she wanted to give hope to the affected people. I already told you that they had to clear the camp in February since the neighbours wanted their soccer field back.

The reconstruction is starting slowly. The required bulldozer was brought to Sindoupalchowk and the preliminary work like road construction and repairs on the bridge leading to the villages is finished. After the rainy season we can (hopefully...) proceed with the actual construction activities. And our knitting project is supposed to help families to at least earn a small regular income (see article by Christine Mayer).

#### HEIKO

As partner of an organization in a country like Nepal it's a huge relief for us in Dortmund to have a representative like our son Heiko on site. With his strong sense of responsibility he ensures that the construction projects are carefully executed, especially according to safety criteria, for example.

A few years ago, he had solid structures attached to the kindergarten building before the rooms were provided with galleries – using the scrap metal that was in our courtyard, this having disturbed him for some time. At the time, nobody could know the extent to which we would benefit from his idea! We had to create sleeping areas for the children from Buddhanilkantha after the earthquake as the boarding school building had collapsed. Mats are placed on the gallery every evening so we have more than 70 safe sleeping places. The structures resisted both quakes without any cracks.

With regard to the safety of our vehicles, we are glad to have a "Westerner" on site. The school bus or the pickup truck for transporting food or materials for the upcycle products need to be checked regularly for necessary repairs. There is no TÜV or anything similar in Nepal and the sense of security is rudimentary. Even with brakes that do not grip properly anymore, people wait very long to replace them, a situation that causes Europeans to break into a cold sweat. I'm relieved to know that Heiko takes the safety of the people entrusted to us seriously.

His wealth of ideas when it comes to inventing new products is an enrichment to the workshops and that he ensures a good quality. Our patients are really proud when visitors praise them. His untiring commitment to the reconstruction in Sindhoupalchowk will continue to play a big role in his work because Heiko makes sure that the work gets done in a structured manner and in compliance with safety criteria.

Heiko is the main contact for our volunteers. He welcomes them at the airport or takes them back for their flight home any time of day or night and if they become sick he ensures that they receive necessary care in a western clinic and sorts out



insurance issues in close contact with the parents in Germany. Last but not least: Our premature infant Pari wouldn't have survived if Heiko hadn't cared so much for the baby! Under his care she is flourishing and is grow-ing up to be a strong and robust child.

#### OUR PARTNERS

What would our work be without supporting partners? The first to name is Shanti's **home city of Dortmund**. It is encouraging to find out: here we are at home with our leprosy relief. The citizens, the church, the "City Fathers" and the local media follow our work with goodwill and support us.

The **Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development** paid for the buildings on the lot which we were able to buy with the money from Hape Kerkeing.

**Rotary Germany** community service club filed the necessary applications and accompanied the project until it was finished.

We thank the **Lions** for our entire Buddhanilkantha external station. And after the earthquake we were grateful to them and to the Department of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering of the **University of Kassel**: their water knapsacks PAUL helped and still help to provide the poorest people with germ-free water (see article by Dennis Peupelmann).

The work in our clinic would be impossible without **action medeor**: this medical aid organization has been supplying Shanti with medication recommended by the WHO since it was founded. Thus, the suffering of several ten thousands of patients could be alleviated over the 25 years (see article by Ursula and Theo Versteegen).

**Friends of Waldorf Education** in Berlin has been supporting us with financial resources, with deploying

trainers and with advice and encouragement for many years now.

The **Keplerstiftung** – a foundation under the umbrella of Diakonie Rheinland – is a loyal partner and supporter of Shanti has a particularly loyal partnership with Shanti through the Diakonie Rhineland: they have been helping to carry the burden of the costs incurred for the clinic staff for two decades now. This enables us to provide the poorest with medical care for free.

The **Eversten Grammar School in Oldenburg** has been generously supporting Shanti for more than 20 years now with imaginative campaigns organised by diligent students and committed teachers. Quite a few young people became inspired by that and volunteered at Shanti after they left school.

In Nepal, we cooperate with the founders of the **Dwarika Foundation**, Ambica und Sangita Shresta. Their goal is to rebuild 250 destroyed homes in Sindhoupalchowk. We assist each other with loyalty and mutual encouragement because the bureaucratic obstacles in the way of the reconstruction are exhausting and frustrating. Not to mention the gigantic sums of money we need to raise to pay for the materials for the houses (9,450 € per house at the current exchange rate).

Dear Shanti friends – we only mentioned a few in this list of our network. I would like to have a big page and name each and every one of you. No matter if we were in direct contact or not: All of you built the foundation Shanti can stand on – a foundation made from humanitarianism, helpfulness and financial support.

With all my heart, thank you!

Yours truly –  
Marianne Grosspietsch

**FINANCES IN 25 YEARS****Foreign bank transfers in EUR from Shanti Leprahilfe Dortmund e.V. to Nepal**

<b>Year</b>	<b>DM</b>	<b>EUR</b>
1992	17,788	9,094.86
1993	52,460	26,822.37
1994	230,786	117,999.01
1995	209,173	106,948.46
1996	233,227	119,247.07
1997	303,372	155,111.64
1998	375,000	191,734.46
1999	408,861	209,047.31
2000	478,700	244,755.42
2001	703,546	359,717.36
2002		509,929.00
2003		414,587.00
2004		411,077.00
2005		463,725.00
2006		424,583.00
2007		467,176.00
2008		467,501.00
2009		480,446.00
2010		555,094.00
2011		511,640.00
2012		418,336.00
2013		323,263.00
2014		412,144.00
2015		583,724.00
2016		558,317.00
2017 as of 15 June 2017		412,053.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>3,012,913</b>	<b>8,954,072.96</b>
Building financing by Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development		630,000.00
Medeor medication		350,123.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>9,934,195.96</b>

My husband has compiled the amount of money we transferred to our partner organization Shanti Sewa Griha (=civil peace service) in Nepal over the last 25 years. When I see these figures I can hardly believe it!

But I'm extremely grateful and happy about the following: I never had to come to you as a supplicant, I never had to ask directly for a certain sum. I just had to tell you about the misery in Nepal and you let yourself be moved by it.



Supporting and helpful, you did whatever you could to relieve the distress: You placed us in a financial position that enables us to take the steps that are necessary to help to reduce distress in Nepal.

You also supported us practically – with encouragement when we seemed to lose the courage,

with aid supplies when we asked for them and – especially the volunteers! – with hands-on work.

Thank you! M.G.

PS: The administration costs in Germany are about 7.40 percent of the total amount. 92.60 percent of the money go directly to the project in Nepal.

## SHANTI - A MODEL CENTRE

by Christa Schaaf

Shanti leprosy relief – many people cringe when they hear that word! These words arouse dark memories in us. Marianne Grosspietsch used to feel like that as well. She cringed inside when thinking about just seeing a leper.

### MARIANNE'S DREAM

Meeting the parents of her adoptive son made her see the human behind the terrifying exterior and she had a dream. And the dream took shape: A real, warming home for those people, not a camp somewhere separated from everyone else but a vivid, friendly house where everyone can be accepted for who they are. It shouldn't be isolated but right in the middle where "normal" life takes place.

Thus, in 1992, we rented rooms and land close to the most famous temple of the Indian subcontinent, the Pashupati Nath, also close to the airport. And something we never dared to hope for came as a godsend: Hape Kerkeling donated his prize from "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" to us and therefore we were able to buy our own land in 2004.

We consciously stayed in this area so that non-local illiterates who are looking for help from Shanti can ask their way. And especially: whoever becomes

cremated on the temple grounds has, according to Hindu beliefs, a prospect of a better life in the next incarnation. Since Pashupati Nath is famous, a huge pilgrimage centre is supposed to be built opposite our centre for all those people – especially from India – who want to visit the temple.

To live right in the middle of it as a leper – that is always a challenge. I remember how Marianne wanted to buy shoes for Nathuni several years ago: the salesman refused to serve the man with the mutilated feet – although he wrapped his foot in a plastic bag to try on the shoe. Marianne had to point out that her money was worth as much as that of other people even when it is used to buy something for such ostracized people.

After a while of being neighbours, the sellers close to Shanti and also the landlords realized: Lepers and other disabled people bring money to the store. The salesmen need money so they have to serve the lepers and others if they like it or not. A kind of acceptance came out of the status "customer". Some have realized that people with disabilities can be lovable too...

After our humble beginnings, more and more





people with all kinds of infirmities – physical and mental – came to Shanti. We couldn't and still can't reject anyone with a "Too bad you have the wrong illness – we are only responsible for lepers!"

According to Hindu beliefs, all disabled people are cursed by the Gods – thus, we at Shanti have to give them a home – a place where they are welcome and can realise: we belong here, we belong to a large family. A place where they can be safe: they can stay here even when they are facing death. They are lovingly cared for until last – thus they don't get set aside to die as is custom for people without a family in Nepal.

#### GRADUAL GROWTH

Young and old people are part of a real family and they soon belonged to Shanti. Children were taken to us, children nobody wanted to have – so called „throw-away-children“. But children were also born at Shanti.

At some point, Marianne asked one of our patients to care for the children. Sati Devi was the daughter of Brahmins who were suffering from leprosy. They wanted a husband for their daughter befitting their social status. But which member of the highest caste marries a woman whose parents are lepers even if she is a verifiable Brahmin!?

Sati Devi then learnt a lot about Waldorf pedagogy in India and she created a pleasant atmosphere in our kindergarten which provides comfort and security for the children.

But what was supposed to happen with the children when they grow older? The state schools are crammers and schools where children are beaten. Those who have a small amount of money sends his children off to private schools. The other children in the class would have never played with our

children because: if you don't want to be at bad terms with the Gods you better stay away from people who have obviously been cursed by them. Thus we had to establish our own school to protect our children. It was a lucky coincidence that a Waldorf teacher from New Zealand applied for a job. She stayed for four years and shaped our school.

The children learned and still learn completely different way of dealing with each other than is common in Nepal's schools: they learn to show consideration for each other and to help each other when one of them needs help.

#### SOCIAL TOGETHERNESS

This togetherness shouldn't be restricted to the kindergarten and school. Shanti is supposed to be a lively, happy "home" for all those ill people, Marianne imagined it to include every generation and group.

Sudip, for example, came to us as a little boy – in his mother's hut he crawled into the fire and his left leg was so severely burnt that the lower leg had to be removed. He needed several post-operations, was in pain and cried a lot.

Marianne asked the old Champa if she wanted to be Sudip's grandmother, meaning: giving him closeness, warmth and care? Champa beamed and took the child into her arms. She was an unhappy woman. She suffered because her children treated her as an outcast and thus she drank more than was good for her. But now she had a task and a person to love. And she stopped drinking – because Sudip always complained when she smelled of alcohol!

Grandma Champa ensures that Sudip gets a new prosthesis when he grows and she is proud that he learned to dance and to play soccer!



The grandmothers and the children – their togetherness is heart-warming especially in the kindergarten: While the children are playing, a group of elderly women sit at a long worktable in the same room. They make our angels, sew balls and puppets for the children, repair toys that got destroyed and comfort the children when they bump into something or when they argue with another child.

Our visitors are deeply touched when they watch the children eat. They do not sit on the floor as is custom in Nepal, they sit at low tables and have a plate and spoon in front of them. Then Sati Devi lights a candle and the children sing a song, take each other's hands and wish each other bon appetite. They also serve each other at the table, pour a cup of water for each other and say: "You're welcome, my friend!" or "Thank you, my friend!"

And the severely disabled children – they certainly belong there too, in the kindergarten as well as in school. And that in a country where disabled people usually get locked away, often even in chains, in some dark shack or similar.

I feel very moved when I see how the healthy children take care of the ill ones: first Buddha, for example, gets fed (see article by Zoe Kocans) so he doesn't have to sorrowfully watch the others eat while he is still hungry. When we make pancakes, the big boys make some for the bedridden patients and bring the pancakes to them first.

#### WORKSHOPS

The following was a part of Marianne's dream: the outcasts, the written off people, were supposed to find a sense in their life and how would that work better than with useful action? One of Marianne's special talents helps her (and those entrusted to her!): she is a "dowser" for hidden talents. That

means: she discovers abilities in the most inconspicuous people and in those that have no trust in themselves, abilities of which they don't know themselves. And in grateful astonishment they see: this man or woman is ill, suffers from leprosy or is paralyzed. But the illness does not define the whole human! The person is more than his illness. He has feelings and needs and, especially has his own abilities, often even extraordinarily beautiful ones.

Together, they look for the right place for her or him, where can she or he work and usefully develop their abilities? If someone has a mutilated foot but wants to work at the tailor shop, he is given an electrically driven sewing machine with a lever at knee height so his foot gets spared.

There is no electricity in Nepal for several hours every day. Thanks to our solar plants which Heiko Grosspietsch had installed on our clinic, we do not need to depend on the general power supply.

New products made out of available materials are being made in the tailor shop: bags and shoes or pillows for the school bus are made out of bicycle tubes; dresses for children are made out of old tank tops, linen bedclothes are turned into blouses and men's shirts.

Even our angels are produced from old bedlinen by the women, they always invent new upcycled products. Products made of disposable materials, they make the patients realize: with some fantasy and care we can make something beautiful and useful out of materials that seem worthless to others.

Another area where the people of Shanti do something useful, essential for survival, is organic farming. 20 families grow vegetables at our outpost Sundarijal, 600 people are fed twice a day with the vegetables in the soup kitchen.



The 80 children from the beggar school Bal Sarati get their lunch from Shanti – many children only go to school because they get a warm meal there.

Shanti has also been taking care of up to 80 beggars at the temple daily since the earthquake in 2015.

We only cook with ecological briquettes, not with wood. The more trees are cut down, the more devastating the effects of the landslides during the monsoon are. Producing ecological briquettes – even the severely impaired patients can do that: they sit comfortably before a big pile of waste paper, tear it up into small pieces. Other workers mix it with sawdust to create a pulp, and those who have the strength in their arms to do it press it into form. Then the briquettes are hung to dry until they are used for the fires that the huge pots need.

Considerate handling of nature – our patients start to see how important that is. By the way, the families in Sundarjal live in wooden houses built by our carpenters. All of the houses survived the earthquake unscathed.

Our centre is in the middle of a densely built city so that our children don't know what plants and soiling feels like from their own experience, what it is like to take care of plants and harvest them. That's why there is a greenhouse on the workshop building. There, city kids can learn how cucumbers and roots grow – and the tomatoes that taste so good when having a nibble ...

### CULTURE AT SHANTI

All our visitors are surprised and marvel at the cheerfully coloured houses. We owe that to the patients from the South of Nepal (our patients come from all over the country).

The ethnic group Maithili lives in the South. To honour the Gods the Maithili paint their houses anew every year. A lot of people from the tribe of the Maithili are now able to paint and draw without having learnt it specifically.

Nathuni, whose drawings you can find in all our letters, belongs to the Maithili. The people coming to Shanti and living there are all disrooted. They feel deep pain because they do not really belong anywhere. That is why Marianne tries to give them a sense of belonging through their culture because she herself could not imagine a life without it.

The Maithili shape the image of the centre significantly. Others recognize something familiar in the artistic cast-iron balcony lattice or in the carved wooden doors which used to be in old farm houses.

When it became foreseeable that we would be building our own centre, Marianne bought these treasures little by little from a junk dealer who collected them from torn-down houses.

### SCHOOL

The most important place where children are embedded in their culture early on is in school. Nepalese dances, fairy tales, myths and music are part of their school routine just as the rites of their religion.

Since the Nepalese like to celebrate they also celebrate the festivities of the Buddhists, Muslims and Christians – even if they do not know the meaning of such festivities... It was a very special gift when the director of a music school offered us 75 free scholarships for our children.

Beggar-children learn to sing and play the flute, drums and violin regularly and a dance instructor



teaches them the old traditional dances. Who would have thought about that 25 years ago when Marianne started to make her dream come true step by step...

The children are full of fidgety anticipation when they are going on an upcoming excursion to the surrounding area of Kathmandu. Here they learn about their culture too. How fascinating is it, for example, to watch the potters in Timi when they rotate artistic jars on big car tyres.

For example, our gardener Saraswati likes to show our children the paper mill in which her sister Soba makes the beautiful traditional Nepalese daphne bark paper.

The children eagerly await the excursion at the end of the last school year: we go to the South of Nepal to the national park Chitwan where elephants get showered, peacocks and rhinos walk around, crocodiles swim in the water ...

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of all our friends and all team members, who have witnessed the development of Shanti since its inception, we would like to express our thanks and gratitude to Marianne. Being deeply involved in support work and living philanthropy, she contributed so many qualities that make her special: her creativity, her empathy, she shared her love for beauty and culture, her energy and her perseverance.

Marianne's efforts to create and implement Shanti's self-help model could not have been fruitful if it wasn't for the incredible support from so many people who were touched and enthralled by her

dream to create a widespread and multi-layered network. Shanti is the first aid organisation of this kind in Nepal. A home that helps the gifted to realize their full potential and which offers a shelter providing protection and a feeling of safety to the weak.

#### INFORMATION ON LEPROSY

*Leprosy – we already read about people with this white "leprosy" in the Bible, read about „lepers“ because they had to live outside human civilization.*

*They had to draw attention to themselves with rattles so that the healthy people were able to keep away from them. They were afraid of contracting that gruesome illness from the lepers, they were afraid of becoming just as distorted – with mutilated hands and feet, sunken nose, blind at the end...*

*Leprosy existed in Europe until well into the 19th century. For example in 1862, more than 2,000 "lepers" out of about 2 million citizens lived in Norway.*

*Leprosy is a poor people's illness. A bad diet, a lack of hygiene and a weak immune system contribute to it spreading.*

*This illness is caused by a bacillus related to the tuberculosis bacillus (Mycobacterium leprae) and it can be easily healed, or rather stopped, by antibiotics nowadays.*

*The formerly ill have to live with the damage leprosy caused though, for example mutilated limbs. They are marked for the rest of their lives, they stay "lepers".*



## LEPROSY IS CONTAGIOUS – LEPROSY RELIEF IS EVEN MORE CONTAGIOUS!

*by Ursula and Theo Versteegen (on behalf of the Bazaar Group Traar)*

Even when the sun does her best to beckon us outdoors, once a week 15 women in Krefeld-Traar are magically drawn to our basement. We jokingly call ourselves the „Cellar Children“. We work collectively for the catholic worker´s welfare organisation, the KAB (Katholische Arbeitnehmer Bewegung) charity bazaar.

It all began back in 1971. We decided to donate the proceeds from the bazaars to charities. A few years ago, a second group came into being and they work in the basement of the community hall. Making the most of our talents we sew, we knit or we are busy making all sorts of crafts with different materials. Many hard-working homeworkers and some skilled men who make items from wood enlarge the range of offers at the bazar. Adding up all the numbers, this makes 70 busy hands and, which is all the more important: 35 minds constantly producing new ideas.

Of course, it's not all work! Everyone has stories to tell, there is lots of laughter and every now and then we wet our whistles. On bazaar days, there are usually about 20 additional volunteers lending a helping hand.

The summer party at action medeor in 1992 set the course for our future. It was the first time we met Marianne Grosspietsch. Her idea of starting a leper's aid project in Nepal was an inspiration to us. The spark jumped over and we too became infected with the Nepal virus.

For 25 years, Shanti Leprahilfe Dortmund e. V. and the KAB-Bazaar support group of the Parish of

St. Josef in Krefeld-Traar have been closely associated with each other – it feels a bit like being a couple celebrating the silver wedding anniversary now.

We had our ups and downs, times of great joy and times in which we had to solve a lot of problems. So that means sticking together, remaining loyal, and not losing sight of our objective: helping the poorest of the poor. We contribute to helping lepers find healing and to live an independent life, to offer children a new home in which they grow up in a light-hearted atmosphere and to enable them to live active and independent lives providing them with access to education.

Our activities aren't likely to take centre stage but we hope that our modest efforts make a difference.

In their 45-year history, the Christmas and Easter bazaar in Traar have become integral components of the city's cultural life. Our beautiful sheep-inspired stools turned out to be particularly popular. These wooden stools, soft padded and covered by fluffy sheepskin, are highly durable and are able to stand the effects of time and kindergarten group activities.

Furthermore we offer a vast amount of Pottweck. Pott is German for any kind of pot and Weck means bread or roll – a white bread made from wheat flour, which is traditionally baked in a pot, a speciality famous for the Rhineland, attracting visitors from far and wide. Particularly elderly people love to bring the Pottwecks straight from the oven to the table. The bakers often struggle to keep pace with the demand.



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All proceeds are transferred to the Medical Aid Organization action Medeor which obtains the medication Shanti requires and sends them to Nepal. Working together as a group to support a specific

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organization becomes more and more attractive, the number of helpers is growing and there is a slow but steady increase in the number of donors. We are so glad to be infected with the "Nepal virus"!

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## MY TIME IN THE SHANTI FAMILY

*by Zoe Kocans*

The first time I heard about Shanti was during my school years. My religion teacher, whose son did voluntary service in Kathmandu, always enthusiastically talked about Shanti's work. After a presentation by Marianne at our school and thrilling stories and pictures of a friend who also spent a few weeks with Shanti, I became curious about Nepal.

After I passed my A-levels in 2012 at the Waldorf School in Liblar, I wanted to take a year off to gain experience and learn more about myself and the world. So, on the 18th of February 2013 I started my journey to a new life. A journey into a strange world. A journey into the land of high mountains, of hospitable people and colourful garbs. But also a journey into a city full of strong smells, loud honking and, for a European stomach, indigestive delicacies which are offered at every street corner for a small price.

There were many things of course that were completely new and strange to me, but it was unexpectedly easy to get used to the new surrounding and way of life. I was especially impressed by the hospitality of the people who, even if they had nothing, shared everything with me. But in the beginning, I felt like I couldn't give back as much as I received and that I couldn't help as much as I imagined.

I started my journey with the idea that I would be needed there and that I could do my bit. Because of

my internship in Germany I was used to being given clear orders. We had complete freedom at Shanti to decide where and how we want to participate. I could hardly cope with that in the beginning.

In my last internship I felt like an important part of the team. Now I noticed: the essential processes continue without us volunteers. There are local qualified people in school and child care and the impaired members in the Shanti family help each other when needed.

Thus it took some time until I found my place in the Shanti family and until I understood that I, the way I am, can very well give something back and do my bit: simply by participating with my own talents, interests and thoughts and have a good time with the people.

With my joy in playing, handicrafts and painting, I could help the kindergarten teachers with their work. I never felt that they saw me as competition, more like a welcome and appreciated help and change. The kindergarten teachers at Shanti inspired me with their soft and calm way. No matter how loud the children were, they did not get agitated and kept treating the children lovingly.

I could fascinate the children with my hobby of Hip Hop dancing – although I was more fascinated by their own dances.



During a project week, I rehearsed a short choreography with the children that we presented to the Shanti residents at the end.

I also used my passion for card games because Buddha, a Shanti resident, is an excellent Uno player. Buddha has spastically twisted arms because of a brain damage caused during birth and thus he cannot move his hands and arms properly but because of that he is very skilful with his feet and beat me many times in Uno.

I could also learn some things from the children in Nepal. For example, the children in the neighbourhood taught me how to draw Henna tattoos. Back in Germany, I improved my Henna drawing skills and then, during my last visit at Shanti, I could bring joy to the children by drawing all of them a small Henna tattoo on their hand!

Little by little, I got settled and found more and more possibilities to participate. I realized that even seemingly small things like taking the time to listen or to sing together and laugh are important to people who can't leave the Shanti centre very often because of a physical or mental disability.

Before I came to Shanti, I had no experience of dealing with disabled people. But I could overcome my insecurities from the beginning. After a while I

did not even recognize their disabilities – I simply got to know them as people with their own personality and talents; and I was impressed that the people were full of contagious zest for life despite their limitations. Anyone who knows Kanti for example, knows what I am talking of.

Many beautiful and joyous memories from my time at Shanti are still on my mind. During the times of crisis that I also experienced, I admired the strength of some members of the Shanti family – especially the strength of the headmistress Rabina who always tried to not let the children suffer under the conflicts of the adults.

All in all, it was an intense and educational time for me. I developed personally during my time in Nepal and I have gained a lot of important experiences and memories.

As far as I am concerned, Shanti has always remained a place of longing and feels like a second home. Even though I could not stay very long (four months during my first visit and two months each during my second and third visits), I feel like a part of the big Shanti family. And I know that I found people in Nepal, "Didis" and "Dais", we will always be connected by heart.

I am very thankful for that.



## PAUL AND A STUDENT FROM KASSEL GO ON A BIG JOURNEY

by Dennis Peupelmann

Hello dear Shanti friends – Namaste! I have been studying Environmental Engineering at the University of Kassel for more than four years now. The main focus on sanitary engineering and water treatment has attracted me ever since. My name is Dennis Peupelmann, I am 24 years old and will tell you about how my studies sent me across the globe.

During the summer 2015, I listened to a presentation by Marianne Grosspietsch in one of our lecture halls by pure chance. She talked about Shanti, the people, the impressions and about Nepal. That day laid the foundation for my current career and it awoke the desire to travel and learn about far-away cultures.

Luckily, Marianne and my Professor, Prof. Dr. Frechen, are good friends. Thus it happened that one day that I learnt during a conversation with him that it is possible to do my mandatory internship for the university at Shanti Sewa Griha in Kathmandu.

Reluctantly I wondered what the care of people in need and orphans has to do with the specialist field of environmental engineering? This is where a wonderfully simple but ingenious invention comes into play: PAUL - the "Portable Aqua Unit for Life-saving" which was designed and developed by the University of Kassel's Department of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering. Needing only gravity and one membrane, it operates without electricity and chemical consumables to turn contaminated water into clean, pure drinking water.

This water filter is especially used in disaster areas like Haiti, Pakistan and, in this case, Nepal. The

practical part about it: like all backpacks, PAUL is easily transportable on the back and you can take it to the farthest-flung corners of the world so that it can be used where it is really needed.

Shanti Sewa Griha in Kathmandu uses exactly this PAUL to turn the already existing, partly prefiltered water into clean drinking water.

That is where I come into play. My task during my internship was to check the filters, evaluate them and improve them, if necessary. I was also given the task of searching for more PAULs in Nepal, evaluate them and improve them, if necessary.

All in all I found 32 PAULs during my time in Nepal and successfully evaluated them. In the end I was impressed by how well the people could use and understand the unit despite having no knowledge about membrane technology.

You don't always need a Ph.D. to be smart. I noticed that especially in Nepal. Due to the unfair educational system children in poor families hardly have a chance to graduate. No matter how talented or smart they are.

During my time in Nepal I got to know so many people, on the street, in the samosa store, at the market and at Shanti, who have no great job training or who have no university degree but who are nevertheless wide- awake and smart and had the brightest ideas for which I would have needed several weeks to find.

Especially the silver smith Kumar from Shanti Sewa Griha stood out from the crowd. I discussed almost all





of my projects, ideas and plans with him. Usually he had a rescuing idea for problems, like the construction of a platform for the water filter to make the cleaning easier.

Apart from my work with the water filter, I had the chance to get to know Nepal. The other volunteers and I became a part of everyday life. We all got to learn about the Nepalese culture by watching the people work, eat and live. We learnt a lot more than the usual tourist since we actually weren't tourists. We became a part of the city and the country.

Combine this with the possibility of experiencing cities like Pokara, Bhaktapur or Nagarkot and hiking in the Himalayas and you get the perfect time in Nepal and become able to tell how this country ticks. You cannot learn this from stories and books. Someone can tell you a hundred times how poor this country is but you only really realize it when you see in what partly inhumane conditions these lovable people have to grow up in.

The most impressive aspect of this though is the way people deal with it. On my way to work I passed the about 60 year old sock vendor Joseph (he didn't know his exact age) daily, he keeps himself young by learning Chinese and reading. That person was one of the most inspiring people I have ever met. He was very happy despite poverty, social injustice and horrible working conditions. I just couldn't understand it. He was so smart, could have done something with his life in a just system – and sits at the roadside every day to sell socks from China.

You cannot find this kind of satisfaction in western countries. He told me he is healthy, mentally fit, has his family and a bowl of rice every day. Why would he be unhappy? I was fascinated by his attitude.

When I think about the things that made me mad in Germany, what kind of things I took for granted and still was not satisfied, I become ashamed. We have so much and still want more. We don't think "Nice! I have a car!" We think: "Bummer! Why does my neighbour have two cars?"

Of course – it is human and healthy to want to obtain better things in life. But from time to time we should value the things we've got instead of holding a grudge against others. Everybody has to experience all this for himself. All these lessons I learned during my time in Nepal will shape me for the rest of my life. The bottom line was that in Kathmandu I have learned a lot about development cooperation and water purification systems for disaster zones but also a lot about myself and the world.

I thank each and every one who made this possible: Marianne, Heiko, Prof. Dr. Frechen, Dr. Bettina Compart, all volunteers, the family in the volunteer house (Romesch, Mira, Rometa, Shamita, Shanbu), the children, the workers and patients in Shanti Sewa Griha, friends and family who supported me from Germany and everyone I met on my journey. Thanks to you, I could find my way. Right at this moment while I am writing this report, I am sitting in India with temperatures of 45°C, working on my next water project, gaining new experiences and hoping that things continue to go uphill.

With this in mind, I wish Shanti a happy anniversary and a great year.

Namaste!

Yours,

Dennis.



## SHANTI IN DORTMUND

by Christa Schaaf

Our reports always focus on the Shanti projects in Nepal but we seldom tell you about our activities in Dortmund. There is a kaleidoscopic range of issues I will now tell you about that occur when the voluntary workers here plan and prepare to help on the projects in Nepal.

Most of you know **Herbert Grosspietsch**, Marianne's husband. It is him who answers the phone when you ring up Shanti in Dortmund. He answers questions, grants grantable requests, calms down scared souls, knows most Shanti friends since they became a part of Shanti because he was there since the first ideas concerning the founding of Shanti, supplies us with impressive statistics at the general meetings, writes letters to public officials, banks and so on.

Thus he has been Shanti's voluntary secretary right from the beginning of Shanti (his answering machine informs callers of this title) – spends an average of 50 hours per week on this job without regulated leisure time. He does groundwork for the accounting department (professional and independent!) to reduce Shanti's costs as much as possible and together with our cashier Bärbel Puchert he ensures that the financial flows to Nepal, the revenues and expenditure here in Germany are correct and transparent.

I often admired with how much patience and detective instincts they work their way through the Nepalese invoice documents that often differ a lot from what we are used to here in Germany ... Whoever has received a donation receipt from us also knows his signature.

**Bärbel Puchert** has not only been managing the finances of Shanti for many years. She is also an invaluable asset when it comes to relief goods for Nepal: Bed linen, wool, leather, (leftover) fur pieces, wheel chairs you donate to us for our patients – all of that gets sorted into a storage room by her and a friend so that Marianne and Heiko Grosspietsch can find whatever they want to take with them to Nepal.

**Marianne Grosspietsch** collects donations in Germany so that Shanti can help in Nepal. She works without payment as well.

She tirelessly does press and public relations work, gives speeches, goes to schools; we organize bazaars and other activities (maybe some of you remember us selling the red carpet from the train station to the stadium piece by piece after the World Cup 2016 for the benefit of Shanti?) and on special occasions, like our jubilee, we create our own Shanti worship service.

In addition to that, we are in daily contact with our co-workers in Nepal – FaceTime and Skype make it possible – and when she is in Nepal herself she reports back daily about what is happening at the station.

It is fascinating to talk to the (mostly) young people who share their life for a while as volunteers with the Shanti family. It has been several hundred volunteers over the past 25 years who give their time for four weeks up to ten months to our station. I also gain knowledge of many of the appropriate preparatory discussions.



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In this booklet you can read about three volunteers resuming their time at Shanti in retrospect. You owe it to our "News" that you hear about all this. Usually Marianne writes them, three times a year. I am her editor, meaning: I defuse her run-on-sentences which get longer and longer when she gets more and more tired... I'm also in charge of the layout.

When the letters come from the printing shop, the work of the wonderful helpers start. It takes many hours until the 6.000 envelopes are ready for ship-

ment. Three of the helpers have been with us for several years. Others join in whenever they can.

Everyone who in some way works with us in Dortmund got infected by Marianne's dream like a "contagious health" (Ernesto Cardenal).

When I look at the result of the work in Nepal, what Dom Helder Camara said comes true:

*"If many dream together, this is the beginning of a new reality."*