

SUMMER
2020



SHANTI LEPRAHILFE
DORTMUND E.V.

NEWSLETTER

ISSUED IN JUNE 2020

TWO BEES

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WERE TWO BEES
SITTING AT THE ENTRY OF THEIR BEEHIVE
IN THE SUNSHINE.
A TERRIBLE STORM HAD BEEN RAGING
FOR A LONG TIME,
VIOLENTLY SWEEPING AWAY ALL THE FLOWERS
AND DESTROYING THE WHOLE WORLD.
"WHY SHOULD I FLY AT ALL, ONE BEE COMPLAINED.
THAT'S A HORRIBLE MESS EVERYWHERE.
I CANNOT IMPROVE ANYTHING!"
IT STAYED WHERE IT SAT, IN A SAD MOOD.
BUT THE OTHER BEE SAID:
"FLOWERS ARE STRONGER THAN ANY STORM.
I AM SURE THERE ARE SOME SOMEWHERE,
AND THEY NEED US.
I AM FLYING RIGHT NOW TO LOOK FOR THEM!"

Phil Bosmans



DEAR FRIENDS OF THE SHANTI-FAMILY,

"If I knew that the world would end tomorrow, I still would plant an apple tree today." We all know these words that were spoken by Martin Luther, but they have become a more plastic meaning for me in these times - watching as our Shanti children plant a large number of fruit trees today, on the international "day of the environment" - as a sign of hope (more of that at the end of my letter.)

Hope is something we really need these days! The overspilling flood of horrifying news, the precaution measures, contact restrictions, the discussion and rejection of decisions - this is like a dreadful ring growing closer around my heart. I imagine many of you have the same feelings.

On the other hand, we have the daily Facetime calls, mainly with our manager Sajana and with Bijendra, our Submanager. Sajana is working from her home office, Bijendra at the station.

They tell me about the really heavy problems they are facing every day, thankful for any idea we can develop together, which they then can work on and which help effectively. And I am grateful for their unexhausting commitment. This helps me to relax again and to be able to transmit the joy to you, too.

For it is you in the first place who enable us to relieve the most urgent pain in so many ways. You are the ones who take away the fear of the people that they shall literally die from hunger.

During the last few weeks, I have got the impression that the money you have entrusted us with, is "really working" in a humanitarian way. We could not wish for a more efficient way, and this is

something that enhances my trust and hope. I am going to tell you all about it - as a counterweight against all these depressing facts so that you may enjoy and feel better.

GENERAL SITUATION

I sent you my last newsletter around Easter. We had been in the middle of many of the changes a small virus had brought us.

In Germany, many small steps to some "normality" have been taken. In Nepal, the total curfew is still in place, however. The police are severely controlling it. People are only allowed to leave their houses in the early morning for two hours. Which means that they crowd in the nearest shops to buy the most urgent supplies.

But what about those who have no money to buy something at all? Think of the people living from day to day during "normal" times, the day labourers?

For example, the washerwomen, the flying peddlers with their small businesses selling merchandise from their bicycles, the hairdressers hanging a mirror on a tree trunk, putting a chair in front and dry-cutting the hair of their clients. Or the unskilled construction workers and farm hands, road sweepers, and last but not least, the beggars, men and women alike. They have no income at all, they cannot buy anything to eat. And that since mid-March!

DISTRIBUTING MEALS

So the members of our Shanti Family have swept the large square of the eye clinic next door twice every day, distributing patchwork cushions woven by our old ladies at the necessary distance.



Our car was sent there with meals, and the helping aids gave it to all who were sitting on the cushions. This is no longer possible in this manner since a neighbour, who was afraid of the crowds of people assembling there twice a day, called the police.

Bijendra was in distress. He could not let the people die from hunger. The responsible officers told him to wait for four days until they had found a decision.

So, our staff let the poor people come to Shanti one after another to give them food, clean drinking water and some hygiene items there. The children had eagerly helped to pack all those food package.

Another idea was born then: the car with the apportioned bags was parked on the square, and people could individually approach and pick up a bag from the car.

At the moment, we have the following food distribution system: Ca. 200 people are living in the slums. A group of 25 each will get unboiled rice, lentils and oil and a full gas bottle for cooking. They won't have to think about where to get cooking energy and need not cut down trees. You remember that tree cutting was one of the reasons why terrible landslides happened during the earthquake five years ago. One family will cook for the entire group, and after a few days it will be another family's turn.

Ca. 150 people live in the slum just next to our Centre and some other 150 individually or in small groups next to them - students, for example, whose parents cannot send them any money anymore. We give them cooked meals - which is more reasonable.

HIGH-VALUE NUTRITION

Our nourishing meals are not just given out "to fill the stomach" - we intend to make it complete food, and tasty, too! Which means that we hand out Dal Bhat, the national Nepalese meal consisting of rice and a lentil curry, each day, in the morning and in the evening. A piece of fruit and an egg on one day each week. Including something sweet, for example homemade sesame crackers.

What the children are mad about is halwa: a sweet dessert made of rasped carrots, ghee (clarified butter) and sugar. For this treat, our children have rasped 50 kg of carrots - on regular kitchen graters last week! They had so much fun that they are going to do this once every week from now on!

The two meals cost every person one euro in total. The money we need every month more now is exactly 500×30 , i.e. 15,000 euros...

THE TAILORS

In order to avoid so much plastic in the environment, the ladies from the slum next to Shanti have sewn cotton bags. Our tailors helped them with this task, of course. Everybody picking up a meal got one of the bags and brought it back empty the next day.

They also sewed sanitary towels - and many, many masks. In total, 2,300 till today; the number will have risen to 3,000 the day you get this letter, for sure. The masks are for the poor - and for the police!!

When the police checked Bijendra one day (one of the few with a special permit to drive a car in Kathmandu), he smiled at the officer and told him "Just look at my mask - you know it from somewhere, do you?" The officer was surprised - and recognised it!



“Oh, you belong to Shanti! You do so much good for the people! You can pass.”

MONEY FROM THE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Right at the beginning of those campaigns, the members of our management team collected money among their circle, and - collected 1,000 euros! They wanted to give a bonus to those who have to do extra work, partly up to double the work they did before, because many others working for Shanti are kept to their homes and cannot come to work.

When Sajana wanted to give some of it to our chef (who starts working at 5 o'clock in the morning now), the latter did not want it: “I am so blessed to work here with Shanti! I am paid a good salary (150€) and my children can attend school here. And you will care for us if we get sick. Give the money to the poor out there!” This is something that really warmed our hearts; we are still touched whenever we think of it.

CARDBOARD

Early one morning, Bijendra saw a man who picked up some cardboard from the owner of a small kiosk in front of Shanti's premises. The owner, surprised, asked him why he needed the cardboard, and the man said: “Do you know Shanti? I go there every day, and they give me a meal. They need the cardboard - they make organic pellets from it.” This was a feast of a day for Bijendra!

This example inspired others. In the meantime, the cardboard collectors have formed a real “de-littering” group in the quarter, an actual campaign, for no waste collecting truck comes around anymore. During the two hours they are allowed to leave home, men and women and even children pick the cardboard out of the heaps of waste and take it to Shanti, quite proudly - as a gift for a meal!

The people with mental disorders tear them to small pieces; afterwards they are mixed with sawdust from the carpenter's shop and water and pressed to organic pellets. They are used as fuel for cooking in their dried state.

Formerly, Shanti had been handed out paper from some embassies and hotels. This system no longer works because of the corona pandemic. As no tourists come all hotels are closed for at least six months. All borders are closed, and the international airport is shut down. Nobody knows when this will change.

MEDICAL CARE

Another problem connected with the total lockdown is medical care as the slum people cannot come to our outpatient clinic for the poor. This is why we take our doctor, Dr. Gautam, into the slums by car, where he can examine the people right where they live. He takes the required medicine to the chronically ill, for example diabetic men and women.

We have impressively seen how important these “home visits” are some time ago: a ten-year old girl was very bloated around the waist - was she pregnant? When she was examined by Dr. Gautam he found that she only had “worms”.

All children are being examined now, and they are dewormed. We wish to feed the children - not the parasites! Happily, we have the special permit to transport patients who are ill in our car, among other passengers. When we got the car in 2018, we had it transformed for this purpose. Presently, no taxis are allowed to drive, and ambulances are rare. We had the chance to take many ill people to clinics with our car whenever our doctor was unable to treat them at home. Four of our male staff can drive the car, and one of them is always on call, even at night.



CHILDREN IN THE SLUM

The times are very hard for children who cannot leave their slums, and who cannot play in the street. There is no room in the huts when everybody is at home: all the children, mother, father...

Darman has taken over the task of caring for the slum children. When Darman was two years old, he came to Shanti, together with his brother, after his mother died. He underwent training as a school-teacher and is employed to teach our grade 2 children. As no school is being held he really has a lot of time. So I asked him to take some paper and crayons to the slums, including some clay from our external centre Buddhankantha and some wood bricks which are made by our carpenters - we have enough residue wood for this.

Under Darman's instruction, the children learn to handle these treasures. Now they paint; they form figures; they build a fantastic world ...

WHERE TO TAKE THE DEAD?

A problem which we have not encountered so far, is cremation. According to Nepalese tradition, the dead are burned within a few hours and their ashes strewn into a river. People have to pay before cremation takes place.

One day, Bijendra saw that family members wanted to take a body to a cremating centre but were harshly rejected as they could not pay. They were labourers who had not earned a single rupee since mid-March.

Bijendra paid the 50 euros from Shanti's resources. The body was not cremated, as previously dictated, on a pile of wood on the riverside, but with hydro-electricity in the newly built, two-year old crematorium, however. This building is not far from our

centre. So no trees are felled any more - as we need them urgently to avoid landslides.

Bijendra has found an agreement with the crematorium staff: They will call him if any such emergency arises, and Shanti will pay for the cost. Bijendra paid the 50 euros from Shanti's resources.

SIGNS OF HOPE

Did you read about the campaign of the peach trees we wanted to plant - one for every child - in my Easter letter?

Bijendra has investigated again. We ploughed four different fields of farmland where our patients grow vegetables for our large Shanti family. Each of the fields has its own microclimate as they are located on different levels of altitude. The owner of the nursery advised us to plant different varieties of trees which are more adapted to each location. Another fact is that groups of different trees better withstand pest and diseases.

Planting season starts in Nepal right now. Today, on the Day of the Environment, our children and grown-ups have started to plant avocados and peaches, plums, pears and pomegranates, guavas and lemons, sweet chestnuts and berry shrub. The little trees are about 60 to 80 cm high, and we got a special price from the dealer as no visiting clients can come and pick up the trees these days.

The centre itself is full of pots with vegetable plants in every corner. The climate in Nepal is so fertile that we can have three harvests if we cultivate it accordingly.

Dear friends, the current corona pandemic is full of immense humane disaster and much suffering. But we at Shanti have experienced something really good:



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Those who have come to us because of their severe disorders, who have been outcast from their societies and needed our help, can now help others who would otherwise die from hunger in their societies - which means that they receive a new type of respect!

You have made this happen - with your aid for people you did not know, who were strangers and have another skin colour. We really thank you for all this warmly!

Wishing that you overcome these difficult times, staying healthy, inside and outside, and stay protected:

Yours
Marianne Grosspietsch