

## A PRESENT FOR CHRISTMAS

### This award is a major recognition to those contributing to the project

Blanca Raidó, a member of CxD and nutricionist, sent us an email to inform us about the first call to participate in the Luis Noé Fernández Awards from the Alimerka foundation in Asturias (Spain). These awards include two categories: healthy nutrition and fight against hunger. At that point we were neither aware of the foundation nor of its awards. We were not really convinced about it but we decided to forward the email to our friends from CpD in Peru. They had to take the first step by preparing a draft of the required report in order to comply with the requirements of the call. They did it, and just one week before the deadline we received the eagerly awaited draft; the report was subsequently completed in Germany and Spain. Just before the deadline we managed to submit all the required documents.

We did not want to build our hopes up in spite of the fact that "Pueblo sin Hambre" is a well-established project that is being implemented in a successful way. We thought that other big NGOs opting to the award had greater chances than us, based on the fact that we are a small and unknown NGO. Our dreams remained dormant. It was the end of October.

In the middle of December we received a phone call. The members of the jury had decided to give the award in the category of fight against hunger to the project "Pueblo sin Hambre" that "Clam per la Dignitat" (CxD) together with the organizations "Claim for Dignity e.V." (CfD) and "Clamor por la Dignidad" (CpD), are implementing in Peru. The joy and gratitude was even greater after knowing that more than 14 candidates were opting for the award; some of them being big NGOs with many years of experience and having great professional structures.

The awards ceremony took place in the spa of Las Caldas in Oviedo on 16 December 2010. Blanca

## editorial

Raidó, Aleix Layola and Édison Fañanás went there to represent CxD and CfD. During the ceremony a picture with many of the project participants - including some mothers and children as well as Deisi and Pamela - holding a poster to thank the foundation Alimerka was shown, and tears came up amongst some of those present. The audience comprised by more than 80 people from different background such as academics, and businessmen/women, as well as the members of the jury, had the chance to visualize in a very clear way that the project is certainly alive and that solidarity knows no frontiers.

The applause received after our presentation is an important way of recognition to all the people involved in the project - including those doing field work and those working at a distance; it is a major recognition, particularly to all those who keep the project alive: parents, boys and girls, Pamela and Nelva, Sarah and Judith, and all the local volunteers. This award should encourage us to continue our work and to intensify the relationship between the three organizations: Clamor por la Dignidad - Peru (CpD), Claim for Dignity e.V. - Germany (CfD) and Clam per la Dignitat - Spain (CxD).

The 5.000 Euros received with the award will be fully integrated in the budget of the project for the year 2011.

In this publication the second and last article from Stephanie Wildenberg's diploma thesis can be found. The thesis is focused on the importance of the social work oriented towards the community in the poor neighborhood of La Mansión in Peru. In addition, an article about the experience of María José García is presented; she spent two months in Arequipa last summer - accompanied by her husband Christian Engelhardt during the last two weeks - supporting the project "Pueblo sin Hambre" and the twinning of the schools La Mansión and Villa Independiente. Merry Christmas to everyone!

The Directive Councils of CfD, CpD and CxD

## HELP SO THEY CAN LEARN TO BE HELPLESS?

Ideas from my thesis 2010

### The meaning of community-based social work in the slums of La Mansión in Peru - A pedagogical approach in respect of development cooperation

Recently I read an interesting passage in Judith's blog who is currently a volunteer from the German "weltwärts" project ("weltwärts" meaning "into the world") working at the school in La Mansión and for the "Pueblo sin hambre" food project. She experienced something I also did experience in 2007. This is a place where people don't get a lot of help from local, national or international organizations but comes christmas 'suddenly' there are truckloads of plastic presents and chocolate that are being handed out by various organizations. Teachers, parents and children asked Judith: "What are you giving us for christmas?"

This question caused some mixed feelings. End of December 2010 she wrote in her blog: "It shows that a lot of the people living in poverty in the slums are used to get something from others, being dependent, they adapt to a victim mentality instead of taking action. Another thing: When they get their presents you seldom hear 'thank you'. More often they want to swap what they get for bigger presents and for more, more, more. Why is it like that?"

That's not an easy question to answer. You would have to go back in time to the days of the colonization of Peru to find parts of the answer. This was a time when the people of Peru were occupied, patronized, deprived of rights and oppressed by the conquistadores.

There are a lot of examples for successful and sustainable development projects. There are also a lot of examples for development projects that have flaws in their designs and were therefore short-lived. There have been several unsuccessful attempts to improve the local infrastructure of a developing country by implementing modern technology. If we forget to adjust the projects to the knowledge, skills and traditions of the native local people the projects are likely to fail because the locals can't relate to the new and promising appliances.

To illustrate the problem just take a look at some well drilling projects in various African countries.

## thoughts

Wells are really helpful at first but if the local people don't know how to maintain and repair the well it will cease to work within short time.

Current media criticizes that "conventional" development aid has trained the African continent to be merely a dependent charity recipient. Another point of criticism is that a constant inflow of money from development aid organizations interfere with the initiative of African countries.

This is not only the case in Africa but in every developing country that is supported by development cooperation. There are demands that ask for more, i.e. "Development aid has to reinvent itself. Instead of touching small scale projects we need to set our goals higher: support for democracy"

It has become clear that in order to be sustainable development projects have to take the local people and their capabilities into account. Awareness of democracy needs to be supported as well as the countries in questions need to be reminded publicly that their citizens have rights that need to be guaranteed and protected. If a development project took the local resources and people into account, if it was a community-based project the need for political involvement and the importance of networking would become obvious. Such a project could improve the chances for successful help. "Help so they can help themselves", words that have been often used and almost seem like an empty phrase can mean something again. These words are a guiding principle for theory and practice.

To include pedagogical and community-based approaches is an opportunity to gain a new understanding of "help so they can help themselves", to see not only development on the outside in terms of material goods but also the relevance of subjective experience and the processes of development on the inside. To professionally give advice and support the process of empowerment is vital to positively affect an individual's sense of self-efficacy. This way a so-called "learned helplessness" (Seligmann) can change into "learned optimism" (Zimmermann). The occupation and colonization of the past must not turn into a modern type occupation of a caring and well-meaning development cooperation which maintains a system of oppression and rather is defined by "help so they can learn how to be helpless" instead of "help so they can help themselves".

Stephanie Wildenberg

## WHAT TO DO WITH TWO MONTHS OF UNUSED VACATION?

The plan to volunteer in South America, thereby getting to know a new country and its people, took shape after conducting some research on line and subsequently contacting three nonprofit organizations in Reutlingen and Tübingen. It was important to me to find an organization near our hometown, so I could easily follow-up with them, whatever the result of my volunteer efforts. After a long phone call with Edi, a member of the managing board of Claim for dignity e.V. (CfD) and a visit to the organization's meeting in May, I decided to work with CfD. In June however, my simple plan to help out in the kitchen and teach English, evolved into an exciting to-do list. This was driven by the fact that the CfD partner in Peru appeared to be setting up a competing project in the same community, thus alienating the local families. Moreover, Judith and Sarah's departure to Peru - our first volunteers with a one-year assignment - was drawing closer and it was hard to get in touch with the cooperating schools. Therefore, it was important to CfD and the Robert-Bosch Gymnasium (RBG) to gain transparency on whether the schools were still willing to fulfill the project agreement set up during CfD's visit one year ago. Also, the framework and working plans for our volunteers had to be defined and last but not least a local organization needed to be found to better support CfD projects in Peru.

„Even if you only get to know that very different reality, it's going to be worthwhile“, were Edi's closing comments during our last prep meeting one week before my departure to Peru. I was convinced this was going to be the working vacation of a life time! I became aware of this very different reality the very first afternoon in Arequipa. My guesthouse was located in the center of the city, just around the corner from the main square "Plaza de Armas" and the cathedral. Its main portal was besieged by several unions that had agreed on a collective hunger strike to denounce companies with bad working condi-



## experiences

tions. Right in the middle was a tent with the more debilitated strikers. Behind the cathedral, and this spectacle, was the commercial hub of Santa Catalina St and San Francisco St. This is where you could find everything you could possibly need or want - from a 10 cent postcard to a 1000 dollar baby alpaca poncho to delight tourists or elegant señoritas.

My first encounter with both schools could not have been more different either. My original plan was to fully dedicate the first two weeks to the CfD project and to get to know the individuals behind it. I was forced to reset my priorities as the school in La Mansion decided to close for summer vacation a week earlier in order to train the children for the school parade at the National holiday. My first attempt to set up a meeting with the director failed as the complete educational staff had a day off to celebrate the Day of the Teacher. As I should have noticed sooner, this school had lots of good reasons to take off long weekends and to cancel classes for teacher excursions. Finally, I got an appointment the morning of the director's speech explaining the organization of the parade on the schoolyard: Only children with a complete and clean uniform, polished shoes and the mandatory sun hat were allowed to participate. All the others were neither allowed to march in the parade or to participate in any preparation activities for the parade. Considering the fact that only 10% of the children in La Mansion can afford a school uniform, I assumed this school's parade participation could not be very grand. The conversation with the school director confirmed the concerns of my first impression. The cooperation with RBG initiated last year by his predecessor to support the exchange of students and experiences and thus enrich the education in both schools appeared to him more like a blessing of money. The German volunteer was welcome. But first of all, money was needed before she could initiate any activity in sports, English, music, arts or computing. Not to mention, certain security measures needed for the computer rooms and of course some technicians to set up the PCs. These objectives were not without reason. Later I learned that in Peru, the career of school directors strongly depends on the funds they are able to collect for new school buildings, paints or other cosmetic repairs that convey the impression of a perfectly managed school. The students and the quality of education do not really benefit from this. Appearances are key!

Fortunately, the school of Villa Independiente was a totally different story. My first visit with Pamela left us both deeply impressed by the teachers' positive attitude and their enthusiasm in preparing children for life by inspiring them with confidence in the future despite adverse conditions. About half of the 120 students registered were absent in July as students always move with their parents to the post-harvest abandoned mountain fields to collect whatever was left and to sell it. Sometimes these children will have



lost a parent when they returned to town weeks later. Guillermina, the school director, knows these families cannot afford school tuition. But her students are always welcome. A boy with Down Syndrome and his hearing impaired friend, whom his family has been hiding away for years at home, were also fully integrated into the class. This is an invaluable experience for all children. I was totally convinced these teachers had the right idea and would do their utmost for their students and our volunteers. So I gladly accepted their invitation to join their parade. There was no question about school uniforms. The sun hats sponsored by the local school authority would do the job.

Meanwhile, I tried to participate in all project activities in La Mansion, such as going to the market with Pamela and Deisi early in the morning to buy the ingredients for the daily menu, preparing the meals with the mothers, English classes with the kids and finally cleaning up the kitchen in the afternoons. Thus, it was quite easy to get in contact with everybody and it was also easy for them to get to know the "Spaniard from Germany" and let me participate in their sorrows and joys. There was for example a father of two children; some mothers would make fun of him whenever he was helping out in the kitchen. Needless to say, he was not totally volunteering. However, his wife was the main earner in the family since he fell from a scaffold. As the construction company he worked for had skimmed on the contribution for his health insurance he was not only unable to work, but also not able to access medical treatment. So we initiated a donation drive to raise the 34 Soles needed for him to get a first diagnose in the hospital. That weekend I realized that even strangers were willing to make a donation if they knew they were contributing to a concrete cause and in a direct way.

There are so many memorable little details I will never forget, such as our ritual of brewing and drinking a Néscafe in the morning sun after arranging all the produce for the menu of the day on the chilly kitchen counter. We drank our coffee while waiting for the mothers to join us and help prepare lunch. After a while „Ballade pour Elise“, coming from something that sounded like an awfully loud hurdy-gurdy, did not make me jump any more. After all, it was only the garbage collection truck. And I also did not have to look for a new taxi every time the driver had no clue as to where La Mansion or Villa Independiente was.

## experiences



Of course, it was annoying when the notary kept us waiting for hours despite having an appointment, or when the school director just disappeared right before our meeting. There were also some situations that made me feel completely helpless, like when I saw mothers coming into the kitchen with bruises, or worse. Everybody, probably feeling just as helpless, kept silent.

Thanks to the support of five extraordinary women that I was fortunate enough to meet in Arequipa I managed to complete my to-do list: Guillermina the school director, Rosa the psychologist, Nelva the university professor and last but not least our nutritionists, Pamela and Deisi. Thank you all so much for your advice and invaluable help!

Looking back to the encounter with this totally different reality I could not agree more with Thomas Aquinas' statement „You may pray for wonders but you have to work for change.“

There is still a lot of work to do for CfD in Arequipa and I am really looking forward to follow-up.

If you are interested in further details and impressions of my two month travel experience in Peru, I cordially invite you to visit my blog - Teddys2Peru - which you can find via google.

María-José García

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