

OMARURU

P.O. Box 665, Omaruru

+264 - 64 / 571 384



CHILDREN'S HAVEN

[www.omaruruchildrenshaven.org](http://www.omaruruchildrenshaven.org)

[info@omaruruchildrenshaven.org](mailto:info@omaruruchildrenshaven.org)

Dear godparents,

Dear friends and supporters of the Omaruru Children's Haven,

Namibia is in full bloom! When I was driving on the road from Omaruru to Windhoek yesterday the incredible beauty of this country enchanted me once again. Driving up a hill, you can be almost certain that you will encounter a breathtaking view on the green ocean that is the Namibian bush at the moment. And if that were not enough, the roadside is seamed with yellow flowers. To add the final touches to this marvelous beauty, the green ocean kisses the clear blue sky, that is sprinkled with white clouds, which, illuminated by the sun, shine whiter than white. The raining season that had begun three days after we finished the roof of the new house, has transformed Namibia and ended the most severe drought in the last three decades. Unlike Europeans, we are very happy when we receive some showers during the festive season and this year we have been blessed with green Christmas.

The Omaruru Children's Haven is also blessed. We are looking back on an eventful and delightful year with many big and small successes and only little setbacks in our work.

Allow me to firstly tell you about the biggest little success of this year. The second-youngest inhabitant of the Omaruru Children's Haven is now four and a half years old and up until March he was completely mute. We then started to take him to speech and occupational therapy in Windhoek every ten to fourteen days, which of course is a huge logistical and financial challenge for us. Not only has the little man started to talk fluently and clearly (he is chattering all the time now). But sometimes he even sings nowadays! The incredible progress that the little one has made has by far exceeded our hopes and expectations and we all are delighted with and about him every single day.

We want to thank Ms. Fabiola Tsuses wholeheartedly for working as an interim housemother at the Omaruru Children's Haven for six months. Fabiola is the daughter of our longest-serving housemother Gerda and in recent years has often worked voluntarily at the Omaruru Children's Haven. After the resignation of our housemother Sieglinde on compassionate grounds, Fabiola agreed to help us temporarily to give us enough time to find a suitable replacement. Fabiola will continue to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse next year and in Penelao we have found a wonderful addition to our team. Penelao is currently a third year student of "HIV & Development Studies" and thus the first housemother with an academic background. This background, as well as Penelao's strong Christian faith and her friendly and open personality will help us to further strengthen and develop the role of the housemothers in our organization. Because it is our housemothers Otilie, Gerda, Lena, Appolonia and Penelao, who are the primary attachment figures, the mothers, for our children – and this is why they are the most important people in the team of the Omaruru Children's Haven.

Alongside the housemothers our volunteers are also contributing greatly to the education and growing up of our children. This is the reason why we are very proud to have been able to fill the first two "FSJ" (voluntary social year) positions this year. We are extremely happy that the cooperation with our partner organization "Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners" from Germany is uncomplicated and harmonious. And we are even happier that thanks to this cooperation from now on two of our volunteers will be receiving financial assistance from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). We will try to set up similar arrangements for the other three volunteer positions in 2014.

The new construction of a family-based house is continuously progressing, even though we are somewhat behind the original schedule. We now expect readiness for occupation to be reached by the end of the third quarter 2014. Despite the delay, which might be explained by the fact that this is my first time overseeing construction of a building on the African continent, we will not have an increase in the originally budgeted costs. Furthermore, I can assure you, dear supporters, that I have learned a lot with the realization of this project. So that I am positive that the future construction phases will be realized even more professionally and that we will not only keep to the budget, but also to the schedule.

If you are a regular reader of our newsletter, then you know that the planned third construction phase is the reconstruction of the boys block into a family-based unit in 2014 and the fourth phase the reconstruction of the girls block into a family-based unit in 2015. Thanks to the generous support of the Kids Unlimited Trust and a substantial anonymous donation we will likely be able to realize the fourth construction phase already in 2014. With this we will be able to complete the organizational switch to a family-based care model according to SOS principles one year earlier than originally planned. The entire team of the Omaruru Children's Haven is excited and thankful for this unexpected blessing and we vow to continue to give our best in order to implement the organizational changes that come with this reorientation in a quick and professional manner, keeping the best interest of our children at heart!

You already know that the two focal points of our work are health care as well as education and training of our children. Allow me to give you a little overview over our work in these two areas in the last twelve months.

I have already told you about our most wonderful success in the health care area at the beginning of this newsletter. Furthermore, we were fortunate to welcome dentist Dr. Coetzee and his team at the Omaruru Children's Haven this year. They did examinations and, where necessary, treatments free of charge for all children and Dr. Coetzee also led an awareness training with regard to oral hygiene for children and housemothers.

We are extremely grateful for the friendly and competent support of Prof. Dr. Pieper, a neonatologist based in Windhoek. She established the contact to our speech and occupational therapists and also discovered a rare growth hormone deficiency with one of the children and subsequently initiated treatment for the little boy. We are looking forward to welcoming Prof. Dr. Pieper in the Omaruru Children's Haven in 2014 to carry out a thorough preventive medical check-up of all our children.

In the area prevention and chronic sicknesses we are happy to report that all children have received the recommended immunizations and that all chronically ill children are adequately medically cared for. They are receiving regular check-ups so that changes in the relevant physiological markers can be discovered early and adjustments in the medication can be carried out where necessary.

I have already told you in our last newsletter about the cooperation with Mrs. Martina Perstling, a children's psychologist, who is coming to visit the Omaruru Children's Haven every two to three weeks. In the short time of her involvement we have already witnessed remarkable progress with some children and several connections have come to light that allow us to better understand certain behaviors and thus react to them more appropriately. It is a further sign of Mrs. Perstling's extraordinary dedication that upon her third visit she brought her eleven year old daughter Tatjana along, who rapidly befriended the children and in the end transformed them all into little, colorful birds of paradise (see picture 2 at the end of this newsletter). Martina, Tatjana, we want to express our sincere gratitude for your dedication and support!

In the educational area there is both light and shadow. About half of our children are between nine and thirteen years and thus on the verge of entering puberty. If you have your own children, you know that a child in puberty is a huge challenge. In this age boundaries want to be tested, the personality developed and strengthened and the own sexuality discovered. Aggravating this is the fact that several of our children are still suffering from traumata they experienced before their admission into the Omaruru Children's Haven and some even have suffered pre-birth damages (alcohol or drug abuse of a pregnant mother). Furthermore, we have a boy to girl ratio of about two to one, whereas the majority of our care staff are female.

We are trying with a lot of love and patience, but also with consequence and astringence, if necessary, to teach values, norms, manners and rules. This can be very time-consuming and even physically challenging. For example it happens every once in a while that a pubescent boy thinks he can avoid a discussion with my blind co-manager Lazarus by simply walking out of the office. Rest assured that I will follow the little rascal personally and bring him back. If the experience has been made once or twice that certain behaviors are not accepted and fruitless, those things will not be tried again. And despite the fact that one sometimes experiences wonderful successes in these interactions (the hug that is initiated by a child with whom you just discussed and argued for two hours for example), these can be very time-killing and strenuous.

We hope that in the future we will be able to transfer more and more responsibilities to the housemothers in this area of work. This is the reason why we are having mandatory trainings and workshops on a regular basis (this year among others "Sexual Development of Children", "Consequence & Discipline", "Helping Traumatized Children"). But this is a long-term process since we have to consider the differences between Namibian and western European culture. It is, for example, unusual that mothers are responsible for disciplining children. This is a father's (uncle's, grandfather's) duty. So we cannot simply transfer western European education models into the Omaruru Children's Haven. We have to carefully and step by step introduce new measures and sometimes adapt them to Namibian values and norms. And most importantly we require the assistance and acceptance of the housemothers of these measures to ensure a successful implementation.

We are very thankful that Laurencia, a fifteen year old girl from Omaruru, has been giving flute lessons to a group of ten children for the last nine months. Last year we had started a first attempt at artistic education in cooperation with a music teacher, but after initial successes had to end this, since the teacher proved unreliable and repeatedly disappointed the children by cancelling or postponing lessons on very short notice. Laurencia has not cancelled or postponed a single session within those nine months and she was giving these lessons without receiving any remuneration. By now we have decided that it is befitting to pay her a little salary. Laurencia, we also want to explicitly thank you for your work and reliability!

We are currently in the Christmas holiday and we are proud of the fact that all six of our big children (two of which left the Omaruru Children's Haven in December 2012) could be placed with holiday internships at the Okajo guest farm and the Schönfeld guest farm respectively. The first goal of this placement is to assist the young adults to become more independent and give them a glimpse of working life. In addition to that we hope to sensitize them to the value of education, because we hope that our big ones will achieve more than becoming mere hands on guest farms.

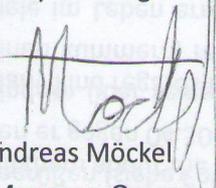
We have been able to slightly lower the failing rate in school again and are now at 20% "repeat offenders" (35% in 2011, 22% in 2012). This is a seemingly nice result, but it gets a little tarnished by the fact that several children only passed with an "automatic transfer" after having repeated the grade already this year. In cooperation with Mrs. Perstling we evaluated the development of our weaker learners and had to realize that several of them are up to four years behind in their cognitive development. It will be one of the big challenges for 2014 to develop an effective strategy to support these learners based on these results. On the other end of the spectrum we are very pleased with the good, very good and even excellent results of several learners. Two boys were able to collect four and six A respectively and we will do everything possible in our power to enable them to continue with academic education after finishing secondary school in a few years time.

Finally, during the Omaruru Oasis Festival at the end of October we were blessed to welcome one of Namibia's most famous sons, kwaito and hiphop artist Gazza and his background dancers in the Omaruru Children's Haven (see picture 3). In his function as ambassador for education Gazza visited the Omaruru Children's Haven at 07.30 in the morning after having performed until 04.30 the night before. He was telling the children about his difficult childhood being raised by a single mother as one of seven children and about the importance of being respectful and thankful to the ones, who care for you and he closed by encouraging the children and letting them know that with hard work and dedication all goals in life are achievable. His speech was so powerful that some of our children were moved to tears. Gazza, we want to thank you and your crew for taking the time to make this Sunday a very special one for the children living in the Omaruru Children's Haven!

Now I have told you extensively about the developments in our little orphanage home and almost forgot the most important issue. In the name of my team and my children I want to thank you very much for your loyalty, your empathy and your support! Without you, dear godparents, dear friends, dear supporters, we would not be able to offer the children this variety of possibilities and support mechanisms. I very much hope that you were able to spend a blessed and merry Christmas amidst your loved ones and I wholeheartedly wish you a healthy and successful year 2014!

Please let me close with a plea to all of you: talk about us! Tell family, friends and colleagues about our little orphanage home in the heart of Namibia. If one of your acquaintances is planning a trip to Namibia or Omaruru, send them to us! If you know a young and socially involved adult, who is looking for a meaningful cause to support, tell them about the volunteers in the Omaruru Children's Haven. Each time you tell our tale, you are helping us.

Many kind regards from Omaruru (also on behalf of the children and the entire team)



Andreas Möckel  
(Manager, Omaruru Children's Haven)



HANNELORE JOEL  
HAUS  
ERF 563



