

History

The first child – Tariku

Tariku, about 8 years old, was a mentally retarded child, living in the very poor area in Kirkos in a very small room with four more people. He was in the Sponsorship Program of the EECMY and they were asking me if I could help him. That was in summer 1981. He was a big burden for his mother; she didn't



Tariku and Derege, two children of the first class.

know what to do with him or how to handle him, especially when he was aggressive. When she went out to get water he was tied up with a chain so that he couldn't run away. Other children went to school, but there was no place for him. How could I help him?

There was no institution or any place in the whole town

where these kinds of children could go. I could do little for him, but more important was that the mother knew she was not forgotten. So I went regularly to them to work a little bit with Tariku. Feyorela, a girl with Down syndrome came shortly after and soon I heard from

"You have shown us that we can do something with our children!"



Askalle Wakero working on teaching material prepared in the training

Families who had the money sent their children to India. But this was not the right solution; we needed to find something in Addis Ababa. Thinking about the solution in my own country the decision was made that it must be the Church which should help these children. And the Church agreed.

At that time, 1983, officially mentally retarded children were no longer being ignored.



Doris with Azeb and Rahel, two of the very first trainees

The preparation time of the first 3 teachers

It was not easy to find people who were willing to do this work. The traditional role as a teacher was not working with these children. If a child needed to learn something, I couldn't just tell him what to do. I had to be willing to do it with him. It was also necessary to use different kinds of teaching and playing material. At that time another big problem was that the teachers should wear trousers; the clothes had to fit to their work.

Finally there were three women left after a practical time at the

Home of the Indian Brothers: Rahel from the

Orthodox Church, Makda from Dr. Jember and Azeb, a volunteer. We planned some weeks of preparation but because of difficulties with the first classroom in Kasanchis it finally took 1 ½ years. Afterwards it was good to have such a long time for the theoretical preparation and all the practical work including already teaching the children at home.

Because we couldn't find any teaching or playing material we had to prepare everything such as picture books, different kinds of games, wooden blocks, material for self-help skills, sport trousers for the children and so on.

The first classroom

Our first classroom was an empty room at Urael Congregation. I thought it would be good because it gave us the possibility of integrating the children into the normal surroundings of the Day Care Centre.



The first two containers, one for all the material and working place, the other was office, teacherroom and sometimes another classroom.

Two containers for working

Very soon we obtained two containers which we could use as workshop and one as office and teacher's room. The beginning of the first class with two teachers
By Spring 1986 everything with the room was fixed and we could start regularly with the first class. Azeb and Rahel were the two teachers, Makda went back to the project of Dr. Jember.



The children are watching Punch and Judy (Kasperltheater), with the teachers prepared during the training.

For the first class we had chosen children at the age of about ten years (we had never heard about younger children at that time) living in the whole town. The children came partly by taxi and the rest were collected by me with my car. Parents were included in the work with the children and helping in the kitchen. It was also part of the training that the children had to learn how to clean the room, how to wash dishes, clothes and towels.



Looking for further children

After a short time working with these children many parents came from the whole town in order to bring their child. It was very difficult for them to understand why we didn't take more than 8 children in one class. (At the primary school there were about 100 children in a class!)

Very soon we had a long waiting list from a mixed population. A further training with 11 trainees started.



Presentation of the certificate

Left to right: Alganesh Tigie, Ato Bekele Basore, Dr. Soloman Gidada and Rev. Franchis Estefanos

The Wednesday Class

The need to have more teachers was very big. 11 trainees were interested, 4 from them were from the Children's Home in Zway and one from a project of Dr. Jember. We started officially a new training program of six months together with people from the University, Ministry of Education, some other organisations and friends of mine. Everyone did it as volunteers and I am still very thankful for this great help.

The training included a theoretical part (e.g. psychology, education, teaching methods), practical work (preparing playing and teaching material) and teaching the children or sitting in the class with the other trainees. To have more opportunity for practical teaching we established a Wednesday Class with children from the waiting list.



Doris with the children of the first class

The Saturday Program

To give the families on the waiting list the feeling that they are not forgotten and also to give them some free time we started with the Saturday Program, every second Saturday. At that time the children came in the morning up to 3 o'clock. They got some "Ambasha" and coke/water for lunch.

The time after the training

Because we still had only one classroom but six teachers (Rahel went back to the Orthodox Church, Azeb for studies abroad, four back to Zway and one to Dr. Jember) the work alternated between teaching, preparing more material and further studies for some months.

Four containers for two more classrooms

It took a very long time to get some more containers so that I could only see the transport to the compound before leaving for good. It was sad that I couldn't start with the two new classes but I could leave the country with a good feeling because there were some good teachers and Johanna, my successor. And most important was that the children and the parents would never give up again.



"You have shown us that we can do something with our children!"

Cooperation

Already during my time in Addis Ababa there was some cooperation with others who were looking after mentally retarded people: Dr. Jember and the parents association.

I was glad that I could pass on later my experiences to IHA-UDP, the further projects of Dr. Jember. Twice I was invited for to carry out further training.

Wishes and Visions

If I look now at the centre I see that each phase (Johanna, Askale, Askale and Erika and now Adanech and Askale together with Christoph) had its main emphasis, and that is good.

I hope and wish the centre can continue with the good work as they have done up to now:

- to help the mentally retarded children to be respected members of society
- to strengthen early care
- to develop teaching and teaching methods
- to give training for a life after school
- to enlarge the different workshops not only for training but also to generate income
- to help the families to integrate the children in their surrounding

I wish the staff, the children and their parents all the best and God's blessing for the future.

Doris Bornhäuser

Participants of the training course carried out in 1986

Right to left first row:
Askalle, Almaz, Bayoush, Alganesh, Belaynesh
Second row:
Doris, Abeba, Destaye
Last row:
Makeda, Ezneh, Shawaye, Aster

About me: Doris Bornhäuser

Already as a young teacher I wanted to work with handicapped children. Further studies in Special Education made it possible to work first with physically handicapped children and later with children who had learning difficulties.

It was 1976 that I came the first time to Ethiopia. From that time on it was my wish to work there. Finally in 1980 it was possible to go as a volunteer to Addis Ababa working first within the Addis Ababa Synod and later in the Head Office as a pedagogical adviser. I was working with the teachers of the Day Care Centers and the directors of the hostels. Later on I started with the mentally retarded children.

