



St. Nicholas Children's Centre Kemondo (NCKK)
Bukoba Catholic Diocese
Stefanie Köster, Directress

P.O. Box 1777
Bukoba, Tanzania

Phone: +255 756 751 605
E-Mail: SEKoester@t-online.de
Webseite: www.niklaushaus.com

*The Lord is Risen,
He is truly Risen. Alleluja.
Glory and Power are His forever. Alleluja.*

Luke 24:34



Group picture taken in February 2015

Easter 2015

Dear Friends and Supporters of St. Nicholas Children`s Center,

Easter Greetings from the children of St. Nicholas!

As I was starting to write this letter, I looked up the Easter letters of the previous years. I laughed out loud when I came across a picture taken Easter 2011 where only half of St. Nicholas Children`s Center has a roof! At that time, some of the first children lived at a nearby hospital, some lived with me. By now the house has already been expanded, repaired and renovated. 25 children, many caregivers and volunteers are populating it.



St.Nicholaus Children`s Center
Easter 2011

In January our family has grown by four children. Though the reason for it is sad. On Monday, January 12th I received a phone call. At first, I understood that a disabled child who we have seen weekly for four years at our Outpatient Clinic has passed away. I was shocked because I had just seen this child two days earlier. Since the family lives in our close neighborhood, I went by to express my sympathy.

However, when I reached the hut, I found the child playing. Instead, the mother was laid out in the mud

hut. What had happened? The mother had Epilepsy. She and her son received medication for it every week at our Outpatient Clinic, but most likely she did not take the meds as she was supposed to. The family lived in a fishing village right next to the lake. While taking her morning bath in the lake, the woman had a seizure and drowned. This was not her first accident. Just a few months earlier, she had fallen into open fire. Only this time she was not found in time. Aisha was only 24-years old and leaves three children:

Ashraf (7): He has a Hydrocephalus, cerebral palsy, Epilepsy, he is blind and has a mental disability.

Irene is two years old. She played happily next to her dead mother presuming her mother was asleep. Only after her mother was buried, she got upset and looked for her.

And Bonifans was born in October 2014. Ashraf's father is „hayupo" (absent which can mean many things). The father of Irene and Bonifans is 60 years old and not able to care for a toddler and an infant. So we took Bonifans to an orphanage for infants.

Ashraf and Irene have come to live with us. The first days, Irene would run through our house and look for her mother. It was heart-breaking. By now three months have passed and the children no longer feel strange.



Aisha with Bonifans
October 2014



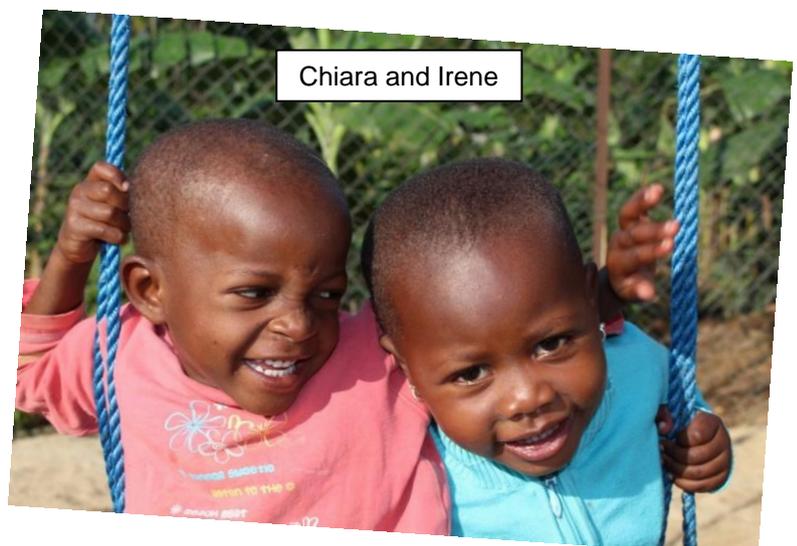
The father holding Bonifans



Ashraf

Ashraf is doing so much better with the good care he is getting. He now has a wheel chair. He is laughing with joy when he listens to music and the radio or when someone is talking to him.

Irene has gotten used to her 24 new siblings. Especially Chiara (3) who used to be our youngest is now happy to finally be a big sister.



Chiara and Irene

We visit little Bonifans regularly. He is doing very well. Most likely he will come to live with us later on.



Bonifans in March 2015

About two weeks later Kulwa and Dotto joined us. Kulwa and Dotto are twins – all twins in Tanzania are called Kulwa (the firstborn) and Dotto (the second)! The boys are 12 years old.

Unfortunately, they are HIV positive. Their mother died when they were little, their father died four years ago. Since then the children lived with their three and six years older sisters. The oldest girl was overwhelmed by the task of raising her three younger siblings. The children have been receiving free treatment for their HIV infection, however, the meds can only work effectively, when the children are well fed and live in good conditions. The twins adjusted quickly to their new home. They are back in school. After having missed years of schooling,



Kulwa and Dotto

they are only in second grade now.

Our big boys are happy to have peers. We now have six boys all age 12 turning 13 in the weeks and months ahead. Together with our three teenage girls that makes nine kids who are rapidly turning from children to adolescents! Seven of them are preparing for confirmation now.



Our Youth on their way to confirmation class

With 25 children we have reached our capacity, however, I am sure we will be able to squeeze together a little more for just one more child....

We are proud to say that in our house inclusion is truly being lived. Our children learn to accept one another for who they are and to make friends regardless of one`s abilities and achievements.



Building a house for the sisters

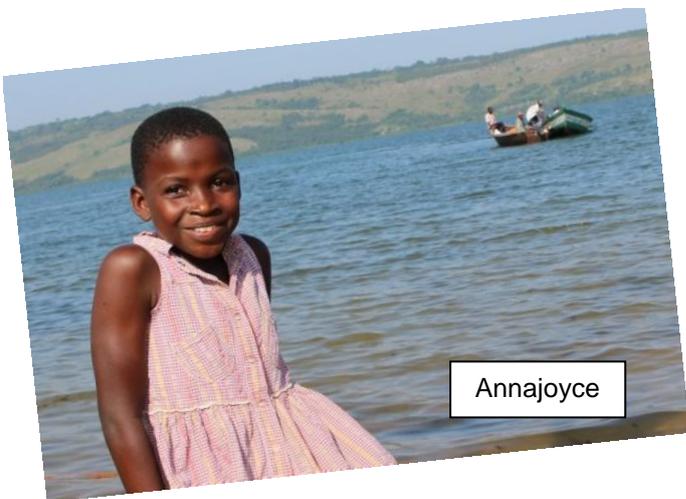
Ever since we have opened St. Nicholas two Franciscan Sisters have ministered as caregivers. Until now they have lived in the house with the children and the (lay) caregivers. However, the leadership of the community has asked me to provide a separate house for the Sisters on the grounds of the children`s center. Financing such a house has been a problem. However, recently the community has made a generous contribution towards building this house. In March we have started building!

Another milestone is the digging of a second well. We have a shallow hand-dug well that is dry in the dry season and our rainwater reservoir is used up before the next rain season sets in. There are very few companies in Tanzania that make professional boreholes with a rig and the whole endeavor is very costly. The new well is now 50 meter deep and we pray that it will never run dry in the dry seasons to come!



Water is coming up from the new well!

I would like to close this Easter letter with the good news about Annajoyce. Annajoyce has been living with us for more than three years. She is nine years old and in first grade. She was born with Spina Bifida. Luckily she is able to walk short distances but she cannot control her stool and urine which really is a big handicap. She has learned very well to live with her disability and she is very independent. Two former volunteers together with the father of one of the volunteers have made a great effort to find a specialist doctor in Germany who is willing to treat Annajoyce free of charge. To bring Annajoyce to Germany is a big undertaking. Just for the application of a passport, we needed to produce six different documents. An additional eleven documents and a plane trip to the German Embassy



Annajoyce

in Dar es Salaam are needed for applying for a visa. It is planned that I will take Annajoyce to Germany in August and will stay with her for a week. The family of the volunteer will take care of Annajoyce and accompany her back home in early October. I would love to take every child in our center to Germany for professional treatment but this is not realistic considering the great financial and logistical efforts. The happier we are for Annajoyce to be given this chance!

Right now our children are enjoying a two-week break from school for Easter. All during Holy Week they have been singing Alleluia und „Atafufuka“ (He will rise) as part of their choir practice for Easter Sunday when they will sing and dance at Mass.

We are wishing all of you happy Easter,

Stefanie Köster and the children, caregivers and volunteers at St. Nicholas

