



## Report May/June 2009

June 16, 2009

### Dear Family, Friends and Supporters!

I have returned to Shashamane from my vacation well rested and full of energy and found myself immediately in the midst of work. As I mentioned in the previous report, Sara was deteriorating physically and psychologically ever since she returned to her mother. Her CD<sub>4</sub> count, which indicates the state of her immune system, dropped from 1000 to 537 in only 6 months, and she lost a lot of weight. In my absence the social worker took her to see a gynecologist because of an infection in the vaginal area and was found to have gonorrhoea. We reported this probable sexual abuse to the police and Sara was consequently questioned, so far without concrete result. For me it was most important to take her out of the environment in which such a thing could happen to her.

As if this was not enough, because of her deteriorating immune status Sara was prescribed co-trimoxazole, a broad-band antibiotic, as preventive against opportunistic infections. This is standard procedure for HIV positive children, but Sara reacted allergically to the drug. She had very dramatic symptoms ranging from a serious fungal infection in the mouth and extremely dry, scaling skin to round lesions all over her upper body. She could hardly eat for over a week because her mouth was swollen badly and very painful; we had to blend her food and put her on a sugar-free, spice-free diet because of the fungus.



Sara came to live with me again, which she had asked for many times. At least physically she recovered nearly completely within only two weeks, she eats enough to scare me and gets along brilliantly with Melaku and Jony. She was especially happy when I took the children to the lake at Awassa on the weekend and to the pool in Wondo

Genet the week after. I do not know, however, how she will cope with the ordeal she has been through psychologically; I am not a psychologist and there is none in Shashamane. I can only give her a lot of love and try – admittedly a very unprofessional form of – ‘experiential therapy’. Sara now shares a tiny room with me, which doesn’t seem to bother her. She is adamant on only one thing: she does not want to return home.

Aschalew is not well at all. When our social worker visited his home, she discovered that his mother had not given him the medication he needs for the Hepatitis B. Since then we have been administering the drug once daily at school and his previously frightening condition improved somewhat. The problem is the situation at home: his mother, who is HIV and Hepatitis B co-infected, has discontinued her own ART medication and is now sick in bed; she refuses to have the rest of the children tested for Hepatitis B; and on top of all she is pregnant again. Her tiny house is already crowded with 6 children of her own and 2 or 3 relatives, and her husband’s meager salary barely supports this big family. After completing 4 months on Lamivudine, we had Aschalew checked for Hepatitis B again – still positive, not surprisingly since he was not given the medication properly – and did a liver function test, which showed that his liver is in a bad shape. The doctor said it had been damaged to such an extent that there is no hope of healing the disease; all we can do now is support him as good as we can and pray.

Genet’s knee has also gone worse, she limps terribly and is in pain. We will have to take her to Addis Ababa to the Black Lion Hospital where we hope she can get help. Due to her tender age and health status an operation is obviously a great risk, but if her condition continues to worsen she will soon not be able to walk any more. Her mother isn’t well either, she has got liver problems and would need to rest, but with one mentally retarded boy and an HIV positive girl she is hardly able to take it easy. She wanted me to take in Genet as well, but I really can’t stretch myself any further.



Now the good news: in August we will be moving to new premises! We found a beautiful, two-story house with a huge, somewhat overgrown garden and rented it for two years. There we will be able to have a class for the bigger children, and there is a dining room, a bigger office, a kitchen with a sink, bedrooms for Jony, Melaku and Sara and even a room for me! The garden is full of mango, grapefruit, sweet sop, peach and other fruit trees and offers a lot of space for

playing and discovering, plus enough room to plant vegetables. I will send photos with the next report.

As you can see, our project continues to grow nearly on its own accord. At this point I would like to appeal to our faithful donors and sponsors to continue their generous support for us so that we can give our children a real chance for a better life. Our plans for the near future are as follows:

1. Moving into the new house and setting up a class for the 14 'big ones';
2. These children will go to public school for half the day and receive intensive after-school support using the Montessori method at our project for the rest of the day;
3. They will continue to be given healthy, balanced meals and medical treatment;
4. To the existing kindergarten group we will add an additional 10 students to make up a class of 25.



Without your help we cannot accomplish all this, even if we continue to work as hard as we can!

### Financial Report:

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the following donors, who supported the Yawenta Children's Center with a total of **58,791.44 birr (about 3,720 €)** in the months March-June 2009:

Anonymous donors from the U.S.A.; Ras Justus; students, teachers and parents of the Polgargymnasium in Vienna through sponsorships as well as the proceeds of the students' Ethiopia Project and the Piano Evening; the story-telling circle; Ms. Heide Mannhartsberger; Dr. Gerlinde Balluch; Ms. Ingrid Hend; Mr. Dieter Reichenauer; the Hubertus Pharmacy in Kaisermühlen; Mr. Manfred Friesznegg; Mr. Manfred Siegl; Ms. Beate Lobis; Mr. Peter Rauscher; Ms. Doris Schwebler; Ms. Andrea Niemetz; Ms. Christine Niemetz; Ms. Juliane Knödler; Sis. Annamaria Pilo; Mr. Birhane; Sis. Annabelle; Sis. Emma's family and friends; and last but not least Tina of the Quai Co-op in Cork, Ireland.

In addition we heartically thank Mr. Franz Hammerer for the great Montessori materials, the book and advice; Ms. Fuchshuber for encouragement and further advice; Ms. Lieselotte Boran for the opportunity to visit her Montessori elementary school class; Sis. Emma Slye, Ras Benjamin and the Italics Band for many vitamins and natural medicines, which were especially helpful for treating Sara's fungal infections; Soozies Restaurant in Cork, Ireland for many books; Sis.

Annamaria Pilo for the yummy sweets; and Mr. Weninger for therapeutic food and medication.

In the last four months we spent a total of **75,546.77 birr (etwa 4,780 €)** on the following items:

1	Classroom furniture	628.00
2	Playground equipment	3,980.00
2	Kitchen equipment	1,293.25
3	Office furniture	345.00
3	Teaching aids	11,302.71
4	Hygiene	2,286.95
5	Food (including cylinder gas)	16,937.39
6	Medical treatment (including transport)	3,892.70
7	Administration	1,564.77
8	Salaries	25,620.00
9	Transportation for children	7,200.00
	Clothes for children	496.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75,546.77</b>

A beautiful summer from the Yawenta children!

**With heartfelt greetings,**

Isheba Tafari