

DIGNITY FOR CHILDREN

Association for helping extremely poor children
and street children in developing countries



Building a bridge with music

Concert trip of Dignity for Children
and the Berliner Cellharmoniker
to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



16/02/2005 to 26/02/2005

Background

About 100,000 street children between the ages of 4 and 16 are living on the streets of Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. Their daily life is subject to inhuman and shameful living conditions. Many children have run away from their families due to poverty or violence. They have nothing to eat, they sleep under plastic shelters and they live in the dirty and dangerous streets together with straying dogs. The city's garbage containers make out their 'table of food'.

Dignity for Children is a German NGO that aims to support extremely poor children and street children in developing countries. For that we collect donations, organise sponsorships and realise individual projects to support cultural exchange. Dignity for Children does not have own projects. The NGO has local partners who benefit from the financial support. The reason for this is the fact that local staff is familiar with the culture and understands the problems of the children better than we could. So far Dignity for Children works with three partners: Hope for Children in Ethiopia, Colibri in Peru and Mobile Mini Circus for Children in Afghanistan.



The kite represents every child's right to play and to give back dignity to each child by encouraging the child's own abilities.

The founding members of Dignity for Children are concerned professionals: four cello players, who form the Berliner Cellharmoniker, one music manager, one journalist and one cultural anthropologist. After Dignity for Children was founded in 2003 it became clear that the association's work would have a special focus on culture. Encouraging children to use their own ideas, creativity and capacities to support their way out of poverty is a key element in the NGOs work as well as widening their horizons through intercultural exchange of ideas and perspectives.

This also described the background idea for the concert trip with German musicians coming to Ethiopia. The idea was born during a meeting of one of the Berliner Cellharmonikers and the local partner from Ethiopia in Germany. They discussed the cultural and financial benefits that could be achieved by organising concerts in Addis

Ababa. The local partner of Dignity for Children in Addis Ababa is Hope for Children in Ethiopia – a project partner we have known for many years. Three key elements were targeted with the trip:

- Charity concerts for raising funds for Hope for Children's street children program
- Private concerts for the street children themselves
- Workshops with the Berliner Cellharmoniker and Hope for Children's Gospel choir *Servants of God* as well as with music students from Addis Ababa University

This report intends to give an overview on the trip, its participants and outcomes.

The trip

From the beginning of the idea of organising concerts in Ethiopia, it took nearly two years to organise everything. Details with the partners were discussed, exchange between the Ethiopian and German musicians started, music was exchanged, draft programs discussed and cooperation partners were searched. Finally the dates were set and flight-tickets booked. Two main events were planned in Addis Ababa: One concert on 23/02/05 in the Hilton Hotel and one concert on 25/02/05 in the German Church. Besides that, workshops, project visits as well as performances for the children were to take place.

When we arrived in Addis Ababa, Hope for Children had already made a great effort in organising the concerts. Tickets for the concerts were printed, posters designed, printed and distributed throughout the city. Ticket selling was realized at the Hilton Hotel entrance hall and via individual contacts. The German Cultural Institute, Goethe-Institute, became one of the main partners for organising the concerts by contributing with networking and printing. Besides that reverend Hans-Joachim Krause from the German Church was an extremely important and helpful partner who supported the preparations and offered the German Church as location for one of the concerts. All in all we found a big network of supporters and participants. The concerts were embedded in the celebrations of the '100 years of German-Ethiopian cooperation'.

Participants

For Dignity for Children the four musicians of the Berliner Cellharmoniker Rouven Schirmer, David Drost, Andreas Kipp and Johannes Ziegler as well as Anna Lena Schmidt and Jesko Johannsen from the board of Dignity for Children came to Addis Ababa. The four cellists of the Berliner Cellharmoniker who play with renowned orchestras and conductors have received many prizes in national and international competitions and play as soloists on a regular basis. They are trained at the famous Berlin Music Schools. The repertoire of the Berliner Cellharmoniker offers an entertaining combination of classical and avant-garde music.



Dignity for Children staff from Germany at the Hilton Hotel sales desk (from left to right):Rouven Schirmer, Jesko Johannsen, David Drost, Anna Lena Schmidt, Andreas Kipp, Johannes Ziegler

For Hope for Children, Yonas Tesfaye, Gizachew Ayka and Hawi Badasa were the main responsables for the local realization of the concerts, along with very reliable staff from the organisation. Israel Dejene from Addis Ababa University supervised musicians from the gospel choirs Servants of God, Sisters in Christ, the Philadelphia Choir and music students from Addis Ababa University who participated in the concerts.

Time was short and intensive, so that the workshops started immediately.

The workshops

Preceding the concerts, the Berliner Cellharmoniker and the Ethiopian musicians had several whole day workshops, some of which took up to 14 hours of intensive working. Getting to know each other, listening to each other play, rewriting music to make it work together and practising were the main aspects of the workshops. Several pieces were practiced together and later presented in the concerts. So was e.g. the traditional song “Amazing graze” rewritten especially for the concerts. During the workshops the German musicians were impressed by the professional grade of their Ethiopian counterparts. Although Ethiopians start to learn an instrument considerably late in comparison to European professionals, they were well trained and skilled. The German and the Ethiopian musicians learned a lot from each other



Up to 14 hours a day: German and Ethiopian musicians work together (Above with music students and below with the Gospel choirs)



and were able to widen their horizons of professional experiences by working together. All benefited from the ideas developed during the workshops. By sharing their experiences the musicians were able to give the concerts a special and individual character, shaped by the intercultural interaction.

The children

Meeting and playing for the children was another main intention of the trip. Those who were to benefit from the concerts should also be offered to listen to the music on instruments they had probably

never seen before. On several occasions the Berliner Cellharmoniker spontaneously played for children. They played in one of the schools from Hope for Children, in the



Concerts of the Berliner Cellharmoniker for children at Hope for Children's school (left) and German Church School (right)

German Church School and in the German Embassy School.

The concert in the school of Hope for Children took place in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of Addis Ababa. The children were fascinated by the visitors and the unknown instruments, obviously enjoyed the cello music and performed songs themselves. For the staff of Dignity for Children the occasion was an opportunity to get a real time impression on the living conditions of the children and an impressive experience on how easy it is to help, to give extremely poor children a perspective and to cheer them up. When Dignity for Children gave out small gifts to the children it became e.g. obvious that a lot of them are unfamiliar with playing. This was another

aspect that showed us how necessary it is to make a normal childhood with a place to grow and education for these children possible.

The German Church School offers education to 1,000 children including blind children. After the Berliner Cellharmoniker gave a concert for them, a school group performed songs and dancing pieces. It was a friendly atmosphere in which the children enjoyed the music and the Dignity for Children staff once again directly experienced the benefit of education and a place to grow for the children.

The concerts

Two main concerts took place in Addis Ababa. One in the Hilton Hotel on 23/02/2005 and one in the German Church on 25/02/2005. The

ticket price was ETB 150,-- (≈ Euro 15,--) for the Hilton Hotel and ETB 50,-- (≈ Euro 5,--) for the German Church. There was a difference in ticket pricing because the Hilton Hotel concert included a dinner.

Performing at the concerts were: the Berliner Cellharmoniker, the gospel choirs

Servants of God, Sisters in Christ, Philadelphia Choir and music students from Addis Ababa University. They played among others pieces from Mozart, Vivaldi, Fitzenhagen and

self composed songs.

The concert at the Hilton Hotel also offered a platform for Hope for Children to make new contacts and to present its work to potential sponsors and partners. The Hilton, as one of the most exclusive hotels in Addis Ababa, was very suitable for this purpose. The audience was made out mainly by the international community of Addis Ababa. Many were representatives from embassies and influential organisations. A total of 142 guests came to listen to the concert. The intense preparations of the



Ahead of the first concert in front of the Hilton Hotel



musicians paid off in a very successful concert, which the audience clearly enjoyed very much. During the reception, following the concert, staff from Hope for Children was able to establish new contacts that will possibly result in further support of their work.

217 guests attended the second concert at the German Church. A very cheerful and warm atmosphere dominated this evening. Yet again the musicians demonstrated their high level of professionalism and intercultural sensitivity. With both concerts we were able to attract local international as well as national guests, which was one of our main goals. At the end of the concert the musicians were celebrated with standing ovations and encores.



The German reverend Hans-Joachim Krause, Anna Lena Schmidt from Dignity for Children and Gizachew Ayka from Hope for Children at the opening of the German Church concert.

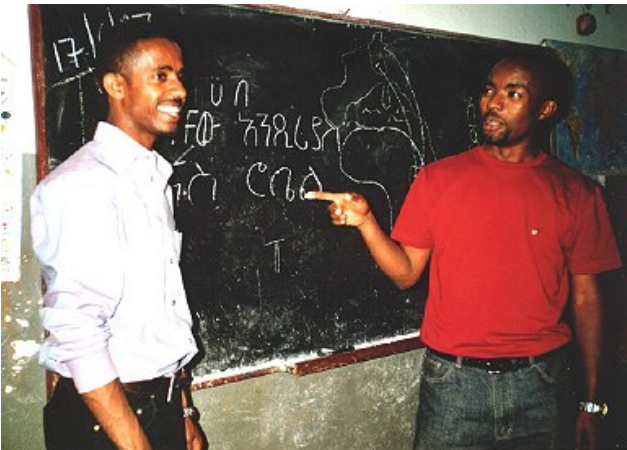
The Outcome

The trip has both a financial and non-financial outcome. On the financial side we are glad to present a gain of ETB 25,000.-- (Euro 2,223.--) that will support the work of Hope for Children.

The revenue of ETB 25,000.-- is dedicated to Hope for Children's "Self-dependency for illiterate teenagers project". In the area where Hope for Children works, boys and girls are forced to work up to 14 hours a day as weavers or firewood carrier (carrying up to 25 kilos, destroying their bodies for a lifetime). The aim is to offer the children a way out of exploitation, guide them into a living situation of financial independence and offer education at the same time. The project is designed to support 15 children (ten boys and five girls) who have been misused as labour force and have no family to care for them. The children are between 14 and 18 years old. Girls will be enabled to start a small business (like shops), boys will continue to work as weavers but will be self-dependent. Each child will be equipped with materials such as a loom for a weaver and get a room for living and working. The rent will be paid by Hope for Children for six months before the child starts to earn its own living during daytime. In the evenings the child attends evening school. The children will get training and HIV/Aids awareness education.

As mentioned, the trip is not only to be measured by its financial outcome. Benefits for the German and Ethiopian musicians were immense. All of them learned a lot and got a new perspective on working with other musicians in a different surrounding. For our partner Hope for Children the trip was an important event to get new contacts and to become more visible in Addis Ababa. It also strengthened the relationship of Hope for Children to its existing partners; including Dignity for Children. We are grateful to be able to work with Hope for Children. The trip proved to us the high professional grade of the staff of Hope for Children. We all learned a lot from the intercultural exchange that we experienced, from a musical, cultural and professional point of view. We are looking forward to future projects in which we can merge our capacities.

Our partner



Gizachew Ayka und Yonas Tesfaye, founders and heads of Hope for Children

Hope for Children in Ethiopia was founded in 2000 and concentrates on direct help for children in need as well as preventing those who are in danger of becoming street children from their fate.

Hope for Children has a wide range of activities reaching from food distribution to educational and sport activities. The main target groups of Hope for Children are street people, prostitutes, poorest

children and their families, children who lost their parents due to HIV-AIDS and HIV positive children. The work includes education, financial and material support, health support and counselling. Hope for Children offers kindergarten and primary school education, builds schools, provides educational materials and counselling. More than 9,000 children have been helped so far and many have been saved from their misery or been encouraged to return to their families when that was appropriate.

Poor children who live with their family or 'guardian' often work the whole day and get no school education at all. Hope for Children helps these children to stop working and go to school. This is possible by financing their daily living costs so that parents are no longer dependent on the income of the child. Grown up poor/street children who do not have a supporter like a family member are assisted in becoming self-dependent by starting a small business while at the same time going to school. By

that they can stop living on the streets, take their lives into their own hands and get an education.

Also health education is an important part in the work of Hope for Children. A main focus in this is on HIV/AIDS prevention but also educating people about family planning and other health problems. Children who get support from Hope for Children



A first contact between Hope for Children and street people.

get access to clean drinking water and sanitation to prevent them from common and in poor countries often deadly diseases like diarrhoea.

Hope for Children contacts children living on the streets directly on the street and invites them to their counselling centres in Addis Ababa where they get information and the opportunity to benefit from the program.

Cooperation

Dignity for Children, Germany, organises sponsorships for individual children and supports selected projects by Hope for Children in Ethiopia. The children who get a sponsor from Dignity for Children are former street children, fulltime (14 h minimum) labour for their family or guardian employers. After the sponsorship starts their working hours are drastically reduced (2 h maximum) and they start to go to school. By becoming a beneficiary of our partner's program they get access to infrastructural benefits and are equipped with schooling material and clothes.

Each child gets a monthly minimum support of Euro 9,--. Hope for Children reports regularly about the children's progress. As of April 2005 a total of thirteen former street children are sponsored by Dignity for Children.

Dignity for Children is always looking for new sponsors that are willing to help a child by giving as little as Euro 9,-- a month. Becoming a sponsor is possible through Dignity for Children's webpage www.childdignity.org.

The sponsors get a picture and name of the child as well as regular updates on the progress of the children's situation.



Many children are misused as labour force before they join Hope for Children's program. After that their working hours decrease dramatically and they start going to one of Hope for Children's school.

Project evaluation

The trip was the first visit of Dignity for Children to Ethiopia since the formal start of the cooperation with Hope for Children. The time we had was designed to combine cultural exchange and monitoring the work of Hope for Children. On several days we visited the various facilities of Hope for Children and convinced ourselves about the usefulness, reliability and success of our partner's work. Monitoring included:

- Visiting Hope for Children's schools
- Meeting children sponsored by Dignity for Children
- Visiting shelters provided by Hope for Children
- Hope for Children's office
- Discussing work with different staff members
- Working sites of children who recently joined the project
- Seeing street children and the work with them on the street

We also discussed several issues that were of interest to improve the cooperation and support for Hope for Children. This included terms and timeframes for transactions as well as details of reporting. Hope for Children however enjoys complete independence in the cooperation.

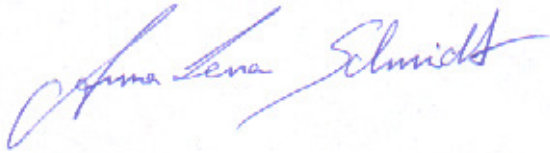
Overall we are very pleased with Hope for Children and have no doubt in the necessity and reliability of the work of this NGO.



Girls in one of Hope for Children's schools.

Any comments or questions regarding Dignity for Children's work or this report may be sent to info@childdignity.org

For Dignity for Children:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anna Lena Schmidt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Anna Lena Schmidt
First chairwoman
Stuttgart, 15/04/2005