

## Friends of Nabushome School



June 2017

Dear Friends and Supporters of Nabushome School,

I have more news to report to you from Nabushome.

**The catastrophic financial situation in Zimbabwe is having a growing impact on schools there. Our society is needed more than ever. Please help us to help the children of Nabushome!**

**This newsletter concerns a single topic: the situation of the teachers at our school.**

As I have informed you over the years, either in newsletters or in personal conversations, the teachers at our school are employed by the State of Zimbabwe. The government traditionally pays the teachers' salaries. For some time now, there have been delays – sometime substantial – in their payment. Moreover, salaries have been subjected to significant cuts over the years. Our head teacher, for instance, earns \$500 gross per month. Whether he will ever get a pension when he retires is uncertain. And no-one can afford health insurance.

Until about a year ago, we had ten teachers at our school, comprising six professionally experienced teachers with tenure and four assistant staff.

The new situation is that the state can no longer pay the assistant staff (young teachers) and has therefore dismissed them. Consequently we now have only six teachers for nine classes, with an overall total of 342 pupils at our school. Where things will go from here is not foreseeable. We could only speculate, which we prefer not to do.

A few days ago we were asked by our teachers and our School Development Committee (SDC) whether we could help in employing additional teachers. These would then be employees of the SDC. They would be trained teachers who are currently out of work. The proposed salary at the beginning would be \$300 (gross) per month. The teachers paid by the state receive 12 monthly salaries per year. To keep the costs as low as possible, our school suggested that the teachers employed by the SDC would only be paid eight monthly salaries (with no payment for the holidays, i.e. four months of the year!!!). That would amount to annual costs of \$2,400 (gross) per teacher.

We regrettably had to turn down our friends' request for the time being.

Our reasons were:

- The costs of approx. \$2,400 (= approx. €2,200) per teacher per year. Two/three teachers would cost approx. €4,400 and €6,600 respectively.
- Theoretically a teacher can teach more than one class at once, as used to be the case in our schools many years ago. But this would be problematic in terms of space. We have one classroom per class at our school. If two classes were put together, it would be virtually

impossible to fit them into one classroom, given that each class comprises 38 children on average!

- Last but not least, the statutes of our society do not permit us to assume the costs of teachers' salaries at present. This is not an insurmountable obstacle, however, since there is the possibility of amending the statutes officially at any time.

In the meantime, the SDC has employed three out-of-work, fully trained teachers who were apparently prepared to work for as little as \$200 gross per month. Our school has an "income" of \$900 per year, which is just about enough to employ the three teachers for 1.5 months.

Where does this "income" originate? As previously reported, Nabushome – like all schools in Zimbabwe – charges school fees. The amount (\$12 per pupil per term) is fixed by the SDC. If all parents could afford to pay these school fees, our school would have a princely sum of around \$12,300 available per year. This money would be more than sufficient to pay the teachers required. But the reality is **cruelly different**. Only a few parents can afford to pay the school fees. Altogether, the school has an amount of approx. \$900 available from this source. It has no other income.

What will happen is already clear. If no-one (e.g. our society) comes to the school's aid, the three new teachers will be out of work again next month, and the school will have to make do with six teachers for its 342 pupils.

We have no option but to help if we want to keep the school running in a reasonably acceptable form. You can rest assured that this will be done with a sense of proportion and with due consideration for our financial situation.

**It will continue to be our guiding principle that we always see the pupils as our top priority.**

This self-imposed principle has applied since the beginning of our support for Nabushome on 1 November 1994. It will remain unchanged.

I had always assured you that the teachers were of no concern to us financially. But the situation has changed:

**For what is a school without teachers? What use are all the classrooms and other buildings we have helped to construct over the years? What happens to the pupils? Without a leaving qualification, they have no basis at all for possibly getting a job.**

This naturally prompts the question of how we can shoulder the extra costs. As things stand, we could finance one teacher from our current budget, even though we have not factored this in up to now. That would give us seven teachers, which would go some way to improving the situation. What would be ideal, of course, is if we could finance a total of three teachers so that each class could have its own teacher, as previously.

If we have to pay for more than one teacher, things will get very tight financially. In this case, it would be great if we could get additional donations in one way or another. Two conceivable examples are:

1. Our supporters increase their monthly or annual donations by an amount they see fit.
2. They stipulate an amount by which they are prepared to finance a teacher's salary, thus becoming sponsors or co-sponsors of one of the teachers.

We would keep a separate (virtual) fund for financing our teachers to make sure the children suffer no disadvantage. The teachers in question would be employed for one year only. Each year, a new decision would be taken as to whether the arrangement should continue, depending on the current situation.

I am sorry to have dispensed in this newsletter with the usual pictures from Nabushome.

I hope and trust that you will remain loyal to our society and that you will share our view that we have to take on this new challenge. I will naturally keep you informed of further developments.

For today, what I ask is the following:

- For your agreement that we expand our area of operations as described.
- For you to consider whether you wish to or could help in employing teachers for our children in Nabushome with an additional donation that you stipulate yourself. Anyone who wants to change their direct debit merely needs to let us know. We will deal with the formalities.

If you have any questions or suggestions on the subject of teachers at our school, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to your feedback.

With warmest African wishes,

Sincerely,

Paul Ziehl