

Friends of Nabushome School



April 2018

Dear Friends and Supporters of Nabushome School,

Salibonani! Some of you may be asking why I am writing to you about Nabushome again when I wrote you a detailed newsletter only a few weeks ago.

This newsletter is for a special reason and has only one subject:

On 3 June 2018 our charity will be 20 years old!

3 June 1998 was indeed a major milestone for us, especially considering that none of us had ever thought of setting up a charity before.

I always say that chance plays a significant role in life. You can't plan everything, even if you try your hardest to do so.

A look back:

Initially, we were intending to go on holiday with friends to South Africa for the first time. It was 1994. Everything was planned, the flights booked, etc.

Then Nelson Mandela was released from prison after years in captivity. Delighted though we were by this news, we did not want to take the risk of travelling to South Africa. Nobody knew whether the political changes there would take a peaceful course.

But we still wanted to go on holiday somewhere in Africa so, as an alternative, we decided to fly to Zimbabwe, where we did a round trip.

This trip featured Hwange National Park, the largest national park in Zimbabwe, where we were surprised on the third day by the weather. Overnight the heat had suddenly disappeared – it was raining and it was cold.

Thus it was that we decided to go on the “village tour” that was to transform our lives. The visit to a small village was followed by a detour to a primary school located deep in the bush – **Nabushome Primary School**. That was not planned either: the tour had originally comprised only a visit to the village.

Whilst we found the village extremely interesting, the school really swept us off our feet. The “African fever” had gripped us. On the one hand we were shocked by the terrible state the school was in. On the other hand we had never before encountered such friendly people, especially the children.

The enthusiasm with which they participated in the lessons was incredible.

The rest, as they say, is history and well known to you from our newsletters and the information on our website.

I lack the words to adequately thank you all for your long-standing support and loyalty. Many of you have been with us from the start – from the moment we began with various ideas to raise money for Nabushome. This started back in December 1994, when we returned from our first trip to Zimbabwe. In other words, we were active for some years before we actually set up our charity.

As I always say in our newsletters, without you and your invaluable support, Nabushome would no longer exist. It would certainly have gone the way of many other schools in Zimbabwe which have been closed due to lack of funding, with disastrous consequences for the children who no longer receive an education.

We have experienced many things over the last 20 years. I frequently think back to the day we received a call for help from Nabushome. It was a message that children had fainted in lessons because they had had nothing to eat. With your support, we were able to respond quickly. This resulted in the birth of our school lunches, which have been prepared voluntarily by the mothers for many years now. From this point onwards, our help took on a dual form. Besides ensuring the continued provision of education, we were suddenly responsible for feeding a host of children (in the meantime they number 340). What would have happened to the children without the school lunches doesn't bear thinking about. In very difficult times, we even provided lunches in the school holidays.

So over the years the school – and thus our charity – has been confronted with ever new challenges.

Naturally we wanted to help when our friends expressed the wish to become self-sufficient in providing the school lunches. Work began on developing a large school garden with its own water supply (a new well). This was all done in team work. Our charity supplied the money to buy the necessary tools and equipment; our friends in Nabushome provided the necessary labour on the site.

When the first crops were harvested, we began to phase out our financial support for purchasing food. Meanwhile we have reached the third stage of this gradual reduction.

As the number of pupils steadily increased, the buildings available were no longer sufficient. So over the years we have financed the construction of four new blocks, each housing two classrooms.

Hygiene is also an important topic. Many years ago the Ministry of Health threatened to close the school because the toilet facilities were inadequate. We came to the school's aid and financed the building of new facilities. Around two years ago a toilet block with water supply and wash basins went into operation.

Obtaining adequate water is a continual challenge for the villagers. They wash in rivers, provided these are carrying water. This state of affairs led to our financing the construction of a shower block on the school premises. The building has two sections (one for girls and the other for boys), each with seven communal showers. Our teachers have drawn up a shower rota that ensures every child can have a shower once a week. What progress!

We have always asked ourselves what will happen to our pupils from Nabushome Primary School when they leave school after a total of nine years. There are no firms offering apprenticeships. The unemployment rate is over 90%! In 2013 we began our Nechilibi sponsorship programme. Nechilibi is the name of a secondary school in the vicinity. In response to one of our appeals, some of our supporters declared their willingness to assume the costs for pupils to attend Nechilibi. Here, too, we have been faced with a series of problems over the years. The children had to help at home after school (as is customary in Africa) to feed the family. Their performance at school inevitably suffered as a result. After close consultation with Nabushome and with the consent of the parents, it was agreed that the children would live in one of the "cottages" on the Nabushome School site. Our Nabushome teachers were prepared to give the children extra coaching every afternoon. We now all hope that these efforts will bear fruit.

The list of improvements at our school that have been achieved with your help could be continued for quite a while. To finish with, I would like to give special mention to two projects.

First, the support given to our teachers. For many years, we were able to say that the teachers were "not our concern". By this we meant that they were paid by the State of Zimbabwe. In 2017, however, this situation changed. Three of our teachers had to be dismissed because their salaries (US\$ 300 monthly per teacher) could no longer be paid. The consequence was that the remaining six teachers had to take ten classes with a total of 340 children. A marked deterioration in quality threatened.

After long discussions with our friends in Nabushome and with our supporters we decided to help. A school without teachers would no longer be a school!

Our special appeal to you, our supporters, brought a positive response. A considerable number of you stated your willingness to increase your monthly or annual donations. These extra funds, together with the positive effects of using the school garden to reduce our financing of school lunches, have enabled us to pay the salaries of three teachers (US\$ 300 per month per teacher). Our school is thus well staffed again.

Last but not least, there is our new kitchen/dining-room block. I refer you here to our last newsletter of this March. A long-standing dream has been fulfilled. The children can now have their lunches indoors, unaffected by the weather, and the mothers doing the cooking also have a roof over their heads.

I come back finally to the 20th anniversary of our charity.

We asked ourselves whether we should hold a little celebration for this.

The answer is yes. It is not to take place here in Germany but in Nabushome, where everything began. We have decided to make an additional US\$ 400 available to the school. With this money the teachers will buy food to “enrich” the school lunch at the beginning of June. The children will thus have a special day to remind them of their German friends. I trust this also meets with your approval.

Before I close today, I would like to thank you all again most sincerely for all you have done over the years for us and thus for our school in Nabushome with its children and teachers. Together we can be proud of what we have achieved. In the years when many schools have had to close, we have managed not only to keep our school going but successively to expand and develop it.

Please remain loyal to us so that we can continue to keep the school running in future. Unfortunately there are no signs that the State of Zimbabwe will be able to reassume the costs of maintaining the school in the foreseeable future.

With African best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Paul Ziehl

Our bank details:

Förderer der Nabushome School e.V. Commerzbank München

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