Winter has come and turned our office into an icebox again. Just like every year. But things are different! For almost three months schools were closed, regions have been under lock-down, people were requested to work from home and wear face masks in public. The Deaf community developed signs for ‘Corona’, ‘virus’, ‘face mask’ and ‘sanitiser’ and I am sitting amidst “Guidelines for schools in Namibia on the prevention and management of Covid-19”, directives from the Office of the President and circulars from the Ministries of Education, Arts and Culture, Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare and Health and Social Services...

On Monday, the 22nd of June ECD centres and kindergartens are permitted to open again, albeit under strict hygiene and safety measures. We installed additional hand washing stations, got a foot-pedal-operated hand sanitizer, a non-contact thermometer, face shields for teachers and children, paper towels, new dustbins with lids… We added cleaning and sanitising routines to our daily programme and drafted an information letter for the parents’ signature to accept the conditions and requirements… We decided to separate the room where teaching and learning takes place from the room where the children eat and sleep and measured the appropriate distance between tables and mattresses… I think we are prepared - at least theoretically - and now wait to be faced with reality...

At the office we constantly wondered what support we could give to our children and families in these challenging, for some really dreadfully difficult times? We helped with food rations where it was most needed and made an effort to take into consideration the nutritional value of the items we bought: Mahangu rather than maize meal, brown instead of white sugar, dry beans, peas and lentils for hot winter stews but also fresh cabbage, butternuts, carrots, potatoes and oranges. Advised by an experienced pharmacist and in agreement with the parents, we also handed out vitamin syrup for the children to help strengthen their immune system. All in all we have visited our families four times and made many additional phone calls.

May you all be well, stay healthy and safe!

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While we were all prepared and ready to start school days with our children (the space below was actually supposed to show photos of children and teachers re-united) a statement from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture started circulating on social media late on Sunday afternoon: “The resumption of face-to-face classes has been put on hold for Monday.” Still on Sunday evening we informed parents, teachers and the bus driver accordingly and went to bed wondering… This morning as the teachers came together at the CLaSH Early Intervention Centre the mood was subdued and rather despondent. The new date given for the re-opening of the schools is now 6 July. Challenging times indeed!
So-called tippy taps have become very popular in the communities all over Namibia, especially at areas and houses with no running water nearby. Tippy taps are simple devices, put up easily at almost no cost if one uses recyclables. They allow for regular hand washing in times when basic hygiene has become even more important. We knew that at least 5 of our children stay at homes without water. So we asked for support from a group that works to introduce appropriate technologies in informal settlements and had just completed the “tippy tap challenge” (https://tippytapchallenge.wordpress.com/) in and around Windhoek. Auguste, one of their volunteers joined us with pliers, wire and experience and taught us various ways to set up tippy taps, using just what is available in the surroundings. Adelheid was so impressed, she immediately volunteered to build tippy taps in front of the Early Intervention Centre to be ready when schools re-open. An outstanding feature of “our” tippy taps: the container is not filled with soap water but with clear water while a bar of soap is hung up separately next to it.

E-Learning and Online-Teaching

The IT skills of the CLaSH team have developed significantly since our last newsletter and the sudden lockdown. First we just copied work and colour-in sheets. Then we recorded arts and craft activities as a sequence of photos and short videos in Namibian Sign Language which we circulated to parents and older siblings via whatsapp. Made possible through a special grant from the ELMA Foundation we finally purchased small tablets. After thorough team discussions and quite a bit of trial and error we ultimately uploaded a series of videos with different stories and specific topics, e.g. traffic lights, safety rules at home, brushing teeth and washing hands. While staying in the North during lockdown, Kristofina had discovered an app on her smartphone that allowed her to edit videos, insert photos and pictures, add frames, fade in colours, etc. She created some amazing little films and truly enjoyed being the editor of all the additional productions that the teachers created upon their return to work in early May. We then distributed the prepared tablets to all our children in Windhoek in the hope that they stimulate and encourage communication in NSL at home. Once the children return to school we will take them back.
Interested Visitors

We were very pleased to welcome to our Montessori class room the colleagues from the lower primary sections of NISE School for the Hearing Impaired (top left), School for the Visually Impaired (bottom left) and two teachers from Windhoek Central Hospital. Linea, Samantha, Adelheid, Kristofina and Stephanie had prepared brief introductions to the five Montessori sections and demonstrated the work with selected materials. The visitors were impressed by the cleanliness and order on the shelves and commended the visual and tactile quality of the materials. They asked many questions, e.g. where to study Montessori education, where to purchase the materials, why mixed age groups, how to include the approach in primary education, etc.

Annual General Meeting

The CLaSH Trust has been registered with the Master of the High Court. However, not all the subsequent steps could be taken as intended and announced at the AGM last year. Hence we will hold another AGM this year and all members, supporters, donors and friends are cordially invited.

CLaSH AGM

on Thursday, 16 July 2020

at 18h00 (sharp)

Protea Hotel Fürstenhof

(just a few houses down the road from the CLaSH office)

Gratitude

We were humbled by the support we received in the past few months, even in these difficult times and in view of so much need all over Namibia and everywhere. The Rotary Club München-Lehel, instrumental in raising sufficient funds for the Early Intervention Centre last year, made a new donation this year to keep the project running. The ELMA Foundation transferred a considerable amount as a once-off donation “in support of our COVID-19 response efforts”. That allowed most of the measures that we took in recent months and reported on in this newsletter. Thank you, ELMA! Modus Computer Consulting made tablets available when they were out of stock everywhere else in Windhoek. The IT specialists from the DHPS (Deutsche Höhere Privatschule Windhoek) gave valuable advice on recording and storing the various video sequences. Simon Wilkie from Mubasen Communications assisted in getting the files copied and neatly sorted with individual cover pictures. Alexandra Sacharow from Red Earth Safaris donated a foot-pedal-operated sanitiser and blankets for all our children and teachers on behalf of her clients from Germany, Brigitte and Jürgen Uth. They asked her to allocate the deposit for a trip that had been cancelled due to the Corona virus towards a good purpose. Kristin Eichholz, Principal of the DHPS, came to donate a second infrared thermometer, which will stay at the CLaSH Unit while the other one can travel on the bus.

We are deeply and most sincerely grateful to our individual donors, who transferred sometimes completely unexpected once-off donations or continued their stop orders regardless. We thank the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare that supports us with a monthly subsidy and the CLaSH members who once again paid their membership fee, often with an additional donation. A big, warm, heart-felt thank you to all of you!

June 2020
Donors, supporters and friends - thank you!

Ministries of
- Gender Equality
& Child Welfare
- Health & Social
Services
- Education

pointBreak

Rotary
RC München-Lehel

Thank you for all the individual donations!

African Child Action
J and D Bauer
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J Werner
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Westkampschule
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I Wuhmann
Prof M Zappen-Thomson

June 2020