



Report July/August 2009

October 14, 2009

Dear Family, Friends and Supporters!

This time the report will be short, as I am once again busy with work. We have moved house; the pictures only partially show how big the house and the garden really are. Of course problems did arise: the day after we moved in on the 15th of August, the downstairs toilet gave up the ghost. Not our fault, fortunately, but it seems that a tree, having sneaked its roots into the piping system, grew disproportionally huge on a diet of human waste products and finally filled the pipe until no water could pass through. The problem was solved promptly by the owner, who worked until late hours of the night only to face another challenge: at considerable cost and with much effort, he had a steel structure for the water tank built in order that we have running water even in the dry season, but when the tank first filled up during the night, the structure with the tank fell and broke. Fortunately we are used to water shortages and have an assortment of drums and jericans to get us through.

Moving house was very hectic and tiring, since we had only one weekend to get everything ready, but everything went well, nothing was broken or got lost. We had a small, informal opening party – I had worked through the previous night and had no time to set up any program – attended by parents, children and a few members of the Rastafarian community in whose midst our new home is located. We have put up the playground equipment, and the children have taken to the see-saw and the slide – the swings are not quite ready yet. In front of and behind the house there are big lawns for playing football and exercising and running around, and a sand pile that was just left in the middle of the yard has been transformed into a sandbox. Our children are regular little moles who build two-storey sand castles with front yards and beflowered roofs.

We have also planted up a piece of land with vegetables, and especially the bigger children helped enthusiastically with the work. Unfortunately there are no photos of this, as I was digging in the ground myself with both hands and had no time to take photos. At the end of the planting session the children got the idea to paint their faces with mud and splash around at the garden water tap, and we were able to allow them to get themselves properly dirty for a while, since the earth here is not contaminated by various feces. The children love to climb the (smaller) trees – so far none of them has fallen off – and otherwise they learn as before, just in a much bigger room with sun-coloured walls.

I took Sara to a psychologist in Addis Ababa, a lovely, highly pregnant woman who spoke to her alone for over an hour. She confirmed that the girl had been sexually abused and said Sara needed more help; unfortunately, she will probably not be able to give her further support, for she is not only pregnant but currently writing her doctoral thesis. We hope that we will find someone else to help Sara.

I have also been to the country's biggest public hospital, the Tikur Anbessa Hospital in Addis Ababa, with Genet; after five hours of waiting, the doctor demanded several tests and a new x-ray of her knee, which I was able to have done by the following week. The diagnosis: Bone TB. In Shashamane they were not able to find out what was wrong with her knee, and Genet might have died from this very dangerous disease. We started her on TB treatment here in Shashamane, and she will have to take heavy antibiotics for the next 8 months on top of anti-retroviral therapy. The girl was very brave during all these troubles: she spent the waiting time in hospital jumping around on one leg laughing and calling out, look how well I can jump! The people waiting there had tears in their eyes at seeing her.

I will close for today. The financial report will have to come with the next report, as I am behind in the bookkeeping since moving house.

With heartical greetings,

Isheba Tafari