



VISIT REPORT 13: Thursday 8th October – Monday 12th October 2009

to: Six children's homes: Doganovo, Pleven, Vratza, Razliv, Stara Zagorra and Dren

Report by: Agnes van Uchelen

Board member:

Agnes van Uchelen: Chairman

Amanda Overwater: Board member NGO Tabitha Bulgaria Foundation Sofia

Pepijn Cox: Webmaster for the Foundation/ Student at the TU, (Technical University) in Delft.

General:

-Due to the current credit crisis, the government has paid 30-60% less to the Bulgarian children's homes since June of this year. This will also be the case in 2010. Some children's homes haven't received any money at all from the government. Bulgaria's financial situation is extremely weak.

-All requests mentioned below will be discussed and analysed in our next board meeting in November. We sincerely hope that we can fulfill as many of these requests as we can, depending on the donations we receive.

Day 1, Thursday 8th October: Doganovo, 47 children between 7 – 18 years old.

There is a new lady director 'Sylvia' who was installed two months ago. She previously worked for many years at the home, but in the capacity of social worker. Another of her talents is choreography, and under her tuition, the children won a dance prize at a national festival.

Two months ago local elections took place, and the former director was voted into the place of mayor for the council under which Doganovo falls.

Our summer project "Be a smile 2009" was a great success.



A group of 10 Dutch youngsters, mainly students, offered the children (between 7 – 12) a twelve-day mountain holiday. All cultural and non-cultural excursions were paid by them. Please look on our website – under projects "Wees een Lach" (be a smile)" for more information. The group also donated the sum of € 1.275,- for new shoes, slippers and winter coats, which we able to admire on our visit, as well as the many smiling faces! The children are already looking forward to the 2010 summer holiday.

Ongoing projects:

The education projects are proceeding as planned. In accordance with our agreement with them, our current sponsor, The Turing Foundation, will next spring end their three year financial aid for this project.

We are seeking new sponsors/donors to help us carry on this wonderful project for another three years. The yearly costs are between € 15.000 – € 17.500. We have so far found one sponsor who will support this project to the amount of € 6.500.



Requests:

1. There is also a need for Baba's for the youngest children in Doganovo (7 – 10 yrs). Please refer to our website under projects "Baba".
2. Cookery lessons for the 15 – 19 yr. olds, for two hours per week, in preparation for their future independent life. There are currently eight children who fall into this category.

Day 2: Friday 9th October: Pleven, Vratza and Razliv



June 2009

Pleven: Diana, 18 months, had been unable to stand by herself 6 months ago.



October 2009

1. Pleven – 250 children between 0 – 3 years old.

Ongoing project:

Physiotherapy: a physiotherapist is being paid for by the Foundation

For the last six months babies with muscle problems are being treated with the specialised equipment funded by the Foundation. Two babies who have undergone this treatment for the past six months are now able to stand by themselves, and walk holding a Baba's hand. This would have been impossible without our intervention, and the child would have remained handicapped for life.

Both girls currently receive preventive treatment once or twice a week. Our physiotherapist is mainly occupied with the development of prematurely-born babies, these are now aged around nine months.

We brought along 300 meters of curtains, made in our own workshop. The material – actually totalling 1.400 meters - comes from Holland and has been given by one of our donors. Unfortunately we were unable to immediately hang the curtains as there was no budget for curtain rails at that time.

The Foundation has to prioritize funds, and there were other needs that took first place.

Request:

New kitchen floor € 10.000 (we still need 8.0000)

The health inspector has demanded that a new kitchen floor needs to be installed, otherwise the kitchen will be closed at the end of December, and food will have to be brought in from outside at an extortionate rate equal to three times as expensive. This is a total contradiction of governmental rules, as the same government refuses to donate extra money for these obligatory costs. The Foundation has received the sum of € 1.700 in June towards this new floor, but needs more sponsors to help with the remaining € 8.000.



Friday 9th October

2.Vratza: 70 children between 7 – 19 years old.



The mayor of Vratza (who two months ago was appointed Minister of Social Affairs) has kept his promise. At the opening of our last and third renovation project in October 2008, as an ultimate gesture, he made the promise to have



outside renovation work done, including new kitchen windows. It is a

wonderful result, and hats off to the mayor (right on the photo). The costs were funded for 75% by the EU, for which the council had submitted an official request and this was duly granted.

Request:

1. Also Vratza desperately needs Baba's for the youngest children 7 – 10. (Please see the extensive information on this on our website – projects 'Baba's')

2. Music teacher for the younger children in age group 7 – 12 yrs, two hours once a week at euros 5 per hour. It is a fact that singing improves the feeling of bonding together, and also diminishes aggressive behaviour. This is unfortunately quite common in the children's homes, where the jungle rule of strength over weakness is the daily practice. Bonding is the one method that can soften this situation, and is very important for their future lives.

Friday 9th, October



3. Razliv: 40 children between 7 – 19 years old.

We have received a donation of red slippers, from one of our donors from Nepal. What a wonderful gift for the upcoming winter, and the children were delighted with them. The actual residence is still in very bad repair, actually too bad to renovate. Three new units will have to be built on a piece of ground opposite the children's home, and the estimated cost of the units will be € 100.000 per piece. No further issues (for more information please visit the reports on our website).

Ongoing project:

Cookery lessons for the eldest children, which has been an enormous success. Laying of the table and serving up have been part of the lessons, so that the children may possibly be able to find work in the catering business later on. The cookery lessons will be continued in 2010.



Day 3: Saturday 10th October 2009: Stara Zagorra, 27 boys between 7 – 19

Renovation result of the Stara Zagorra boy's department (7 – 12 yrs).

Our wildest dreams were exceeded when we saw the results of the renovations which have taken place this summer. We are deeply grateful to our donors, and a feeling of such happiness for the boys overtook us. We are exceptionally grateful to the Christian Youth work group for Bulgaria, from Wijk & Aalburg, who selflessly devoted two whole weeks to creatively devising and completing these renovation works. This result is also the outcome of the fantastic relationship created between this group and the boys themselves. (Please see the photos of the old situation on our website – projects: Stara Zagorra – more photos will gladly be sent upon request).



new bathroom



Together with Agnes(l), Amanda (Mi.) & Rilka (dir.)



new bedroom

2010

Next summer we are going to address the renovations for the boys between 12 – 19 yrs, including the computer room. The older boys have of course just as much right to a new bright room as the others. We will be creating their own separate living unit (17-19yrs.), in anticipation of their steps towards independence - these boys will have to leave the home at the age of 18/19 yrs.

Estimated costs – € 42.000

We have reserves of € 30.000 set aside for this (10.000 on behalf of the Foundation, 10.000 from the Work Group Wijk & Aalburg, and 10.000 on behalf of the Marthe van Rijswijk Foundation).

There will be discussions next March with the NGO on our financial situation at that time, in order for us to prepare these summer renovations, and to once again put to good use the efforts of the Work Group from Wijk and Aalburg, all this of course depending on the budget at that moment and the anticipated further income.

We of course are hopeful that we have been able to cover the deficit of € 12.000 at that time.

We will endeavour to do this by means of our own efforts, and hopefully of those from third parties.

Requests:

1. Three mirrors above the washbasins.
2. Shower gel and shampoo. Thanks to the new showers, the boys are now going to have a daily shower instead of once a week. The showers used to be in the cellar, and they had to go downstairs half naked to reach these, which during winter was a very chilly experience. So improved hygiene is also one of the gains of the new bathroom situation.
3. Table mats instead of tablecloths.
4. Duvets, 20 are needed plus duvet covers and pillow cases
5. Sheets – fitted or loose, 40 are needed.
6. Large TV for the new lounge, good second hand is also welcome
7. Carpets/rugs for the new laminate floor, enabling playing on the ground

If the above articles are offered to us, we can take them with us on our visit planned in July 2010.



Day 4: Sunday 11th October: DREN, 40 children 3 – 7 yrs.



BABA Ekaterina with Victoria and Svetoslav



Together with our webmaster Pepijn Cox (student)

The BABA-project is a great success, and since April 2007 we now have seven BABA's (see our website- projects, "Baba's")

The children are improving immensely. One girl who has Down's syndrome (photo) is now even going to the normal municipal school. Initially she was very introvert, but due to the love and attention given to her by her Baba, has improved tremendously and is now socializing with others and talking non-stop.

The children going to the junior school for the first time are helped to prepare for this by their Baba, learning to read and write so that they gain confidence in themselves in order to proceed into this new phase of their lives. Four of the seven Baba's are ex-teachers, and through their love and care even the very aggressive children are becoming more calm and dependent.

All the donors who adopted a Baba will shortly be receiving an evaluation for 2008/2009 on the children assigned to their Baba with a new photo.

The Foundation pays for all disinfectant materials, and will continue to do so in 2010.

Requests:

1. New clothes cupboards
2. More Baba's.

Our next visit will be in March/April 2010

Our next (digital) mail: Christmas, end November/beginning December

Kind regards and grateful thanks for your donations and the trust given.
Bulgarian Children's Refuge Foundation "faith, hope and love"

13th October 2009

Our Bankaccount in the Netherlands:

IBANnr. NL94 Rabo00398272506 BIC code: RaboNL2U



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