Dear friends,

in his newsletter we have the opportunity to have outside visitors raise their voices. They have gone through a captivating, life-changing time in our homes. There are Hans-Joachim and Elvira Krause (Hans and Elvi) who offered three-week holiday workshops in soccer and painting; as well as a participant of the October 2017 travel group who shares her experience in our home. This travel group featured a particularly large number of sponsors. They were thrilled so see “their” children, but our young people were just as excited because writing letters to someone you have met personally is a much different experience.

Read what the Krause couple remarks regarding their visit:

*“In 2016 we participated in the annual Self Help Nepal travel group. We were delighted to visit the homes and feel the sincere kindness of children who come from difficult circumstances and are now well taken care of. During this trip I (Hans) had taken jerseys and gadgets from a well-known German soccer club as a gift for all soccer loving boys and girls. They absolutely loved it. This lead me to form an idea to coach these youngsters, and again the soccer club generously provided many gifts that I could take to Nepal.*

*There is no art education at Kathmandu schools, so we decided to have some workshops and try out new creative skills. We assembled all needed materials and planned our adventure after talking to Ellen Dietrich.*

*After being greeted by children and volunteers we distributed the sports materials. Soon thereafter, we formed groups for soccer practice, among them two groups of girls who were also quite enthusiastic. During the Dashain holidays, many children departed to their respective villages. However, our fun wasn’t spoiled at all, and the children kept practicing every day in their free time. Some experienced volunteers continued the practice.*

*The art workshops were carried out in age groups. We were often greeted with the words “uncle, draw!”, and it was fascinating to see how the younger children gained better focus each day. They were particularly gifted in drawing, and the older ones (as well as the volunteers) showed skills using brushes and paint. Of course, we were lucky that the paint was top notch, easy to use and radiant in color. Some volunteers were so excited that they wanted to continue the workshops after our departure. We hope it will become a tradition! We admire the volunteers for their dedication, vitality, and ability to show empathy. They are one of the reasons why we see a bright future for this organization.*

*Most importantly, however, was Elvi’s experience with the small children. As the volunteers represent big brothers and sisters in the home’s family, they have no real motherly or grandmotherly figure in their daily lives. Many children with typical age-related ‘ants in the pants’ sought Elvi to have some sort of ‘emotional time-out’ and were much calmer and more peaceful afterwards.”*

Unfortunately, there is not enough room to include Elvi’s account, but she was particularly touched that many children recognized her from the visit a year before. Take six-year-old Jamuna for example who whole-heartily jumped into her arms as if they were old friends. Or take Saugat, six years of age as well, who needs much attention at all times and used to cry quickly when not granted immediately what he wanted. Elvi’s full-scale care and support made him much calmer. He now also shows more enthusiasm in activities when he’s not in the center of attention.

Hans and Elvi were deeply moved by the children’s farewell, prepared with the help of the volunteers, when they unexpectedly received small letters by many children. They feel a deep connection to the organization and want to keep supporting it.

One of the highlights for each of our organization’s travel groups is the visit in our homes. Participant Dr. Sonja-Maria Bauer tells her personal impressions and speaks for the whole group:

*“A journey through Nepal itself is rich in impressions, surprises and adventures. One of the highlights remains the visit on the Self Help Nepal grounds in Kathmandu, established by Ellen Dietrich for the past sixteen years. During the Tihar festival the 150 children, ranging from age 4 to 24, greeted us in the most festive ways by giving us marigold garlands and shawls. Some group participants were eager to meet personally the child they had been sponsoring and only had received letters from so far.*

*That night, these young people had put together a beautiful program of various traditional dances and songs in colorful robes. With acrobatics and even breakdance, they also showed us that some of their interests are quite similar to those of their peers all around the world. We were particularly impressed by a small choir led by a volunteer with a variety of international music. The program had been put together and prepared by local dance and music teachers who regularly visit the homes, as well as the approx. 18 volunteers who spend four to ten months with the children and help them with their homework as well as preparing leisure and sports activities. After the program we were invited to have “Dal Bhat”, the most traditional Nepali dish: Rice, lentil soup, vegetable curry, tomato pickle. We used this time to approach the children that we sponsor and learn of their daily experiences. They get up as early as five o’clock in the morning, do exercises, have study time and then depart for eight hours of school (six days a week). Class ten spends up to twelve hours per day in school, only to come back home and continue their studying.*

*It was already dark outside when we left, thoroughly impressed by these young people’s radiant happiness and heartfelt welcome into their midst.”*

We are proud of our volunteers and how enthusiastic and dedicated they participate in our homes and enhance the children’s lives with their talents and skills. Volunteer spots are available from March 2018 (boys) and August 2018 (girls). Most volunteers arrive after graduating from school and stay with us for about four months. Special arrangements are provided for full time employees and retired persons.

Many of you contacted us when this year’s monsoon flooded vast parts of the country. Fortunately, Kathmandu valley was spared. Down South, however, the fertile Terai region was completely robbed of its harvest. Many houses were destroyed, many lives were lost. Without governmental support of any kind those farmers practically lost their existence. Food prices continue to rise as does the poverty. As finances are already tight for our 155 children, we are unable to render assistance in that part of the country. We still need sponsors for 25 new children. Sponsorships start from 35 US dollars per month.

2018 marks the 20th anniversary of our organization. We will conduct different events in the Schwäbisch Gmünd area. If you are interested in events in your community, please contact us. More information will be available on our website in January. If and when the next travel group goes to Nepal has not been fixed yet but may already happen as early as Easter 2018. Please contact us via email if you are interested.

I thank you in the name of all our children for your invaluable support. Please keep the faith. We need you to be able to continue with our work.

Some of you have suggested to send the newsletter via email in the future. If you are interested, please forward your email address to us.

If you live in the U.S. and want to support this organization you can do so by sending a check to the following American organization that is kind enough to transfer your contribution to our account in Nepal and to issue a tax refund slip to you.

Nepal Hope

38112 Young Dr

Fremont CA 94536.

You can also make a contribution by using their web page [www.nepalhope.org](http://www.nepalhope.org). Please specify our organization by stating “for SHN” in both cases.

“SHN” stands for Self Help Nepal, the name of my organization in Nepal.

I wish you a merry Christmas holiday season!