

Hosman, Easter 2019

Dear friends,

every morning Cristina would already be waiting outside the Habakuk Social Centre when Lili unlocked the gates. Then she would take a pail and cleaning equipment and walk over to the to the "Resi Well". It is protected by a wooden hut but always remains open so that the families living in the adjoining settlement "77" can fetch water. In the evenings the women sit inside on the benches and gossip until all have filled their bottles. Outside, the children eavesdrop on their mothers through the gaps between the wooden planks. Cristina's first chore in the morning was to remove the traces of the night before, so that the well could dispense its water in clean surroundings. Then she would commence cleaning the Social Centre. The building is full of children all day, some because they do not attend school, others coming in after school for support in doing their homework. They study, play and sing. Towards midday, Cristina started preparing the soup, laid the table and washed up afterwards. In the afternoon she helped the little ones take showers and assisted the mothers in doing their laundry in the big tub. And in the evening, tired, she would return home to her parents, where more than enough housework was still waiting.

Cristina comes from a Ziegental (Tichindeal) family. She has eight siblings, her parents eke out a living doing unskilled labour. They all dwell in a single room with an open hearth. They own a horse, a pig and a few chickens. Her parents are pleased when the older girls soon move in with a man – that eases their fight for survival.

But Cristina did not have to move in with someone, as she worked in the Social Centre and brought home her wages. Thus she was also lucky enough to be able to choose her fellow for herself. Most children are married off by their parents – sold, to all intents and purposes. Soon Cristina became pregnant. But where should they live?

That would have been impossible at her parents' house, especially with a baby. We offered them lodging in Casa Erika, a house we had just renovated. It was meant for young people who work in the greenhouse. The young family moved into the gardener's house. What good fortune for them all when little Robert was born in a warm and quiet home. Cristina watched over the garden and vegetables were stolen much less often.

Spring came and women from the village came to garden in the greenhouse. There was a lot to do, and Cristina wanted to work along with them, her baby on her arm. Angie, the boss protested: "You are still on maternity leave for the whole year." "But I want to do something. The little one is right here near by." Thus Cristina became fully involved again.

Motivating the young people to work instead of just hanging around can often be very difficult. They have no support from home, no staying power, have never learned to read and write. Cristina is leading the way. She has a family and a home, she can work. We hope she will infect many others. A light for Ziegental.

Dear friends, the children peer through the gaps in the well-house wall, and with their gazes shines a gentle light. Their thirst for knowledge brightens that light. They learn and study and their light becomes an Easter beacon which shall send its beams far abroad, into your homes. May God reward you for your help and give you joy!

*Thank you for your confidence
Fr. Georg Sporschill SJ*