



## PHYSIOTHERAPY PROJECT IN SRI LANKA

11/2012 – 2013

It's time again, and with great joy and many new ideas and necessary Souvenirs as rollators and different treatment material which were sponsored by lovely people, I went to the **Peraliycenter in Telwatte** where my kids expected me very excited. How I missed the smile of the children. The **team of the Center, Dr. De Zoysa and Nurse Dinuscha** received me very warmly and after a few short conversations and planning I started to work. Up to two children who are unfortunately deceased, all come very motivated for the therapy and they presented proudly their homework, which I asked them to do before my last departure from the country. **I could see that all the children in my absence diligently made all exercises under the supervision and control of parents and Dr. De Zoysa.** So easy I could pursue my therapeutic objectives in each individual child and could go further with the schedule. **In my absence, our project has spread in the surrounding villages and some children were placed in the center on a waiting list.** These children, I could now see and include them in our new planning. Thus now are about 35 children with very different syndromes in treatment. The treatment concept includes **physical therapy, combined with Craniosacral therapy.** Depending on the condition of the child they are 1 - 2x per week treated in the center. The duration of treatment is between 30 - 45 minutes per child. Most diagnoses are made partly not entirely clear, but almost all children have diagnoses as CP (cerebral palsy), unadjusted epilepsy, traumatic consequences, mentally and physical developmental delays. Since almost all children previously never or hardly were treated with physiotherapy, the accompanying symptoms and extreme deformities are often of the lower extremities. If some of the children could have been with timely Treatment surely could be prevent such an accident and many children would be still standing on their feet. Thus, for some only remains the supply of a wheelchair or walker. Nevertheless, the children always come very motivated and on time for therapy.

In particular, the parents are very grateful that someone cares about and accepts their children.

Apart from the treatment I give parents advices and homework , which they **should make at home with their children.** Interestingly, this works very well. The parents here in Sri Lanka are not used to this because, unfortunately, here a disabled child belongs often for "weak part" of the society and thus often remains on their own way of destiny. Therefore stands for me in this Pilotproject: Help to help themselves first. People are very open to all new things and with some patience and helpful advices you can make get something going on in a good way.

For example, starting for 2 days a **dentist project with a "mobile dental clinic"** to give the disabled children a dental control and supply. Furthermore, January once per week in the



afternoon, a workshop for children with learning difficulties will take place. You can not compare this here with the European work. But I try as best I can, adapting them to the needs of children. But you have to be very flexible here. Often the conditions let much to be desired. But our motto "all good" works always and I never give up I hope to find many people who support me in this Project. Thus, we could find for example, an **orthopedic technician in the area trace of Colombo**, where I can get wheelchairs and rollators and adapt to children. These costs will be funded by donations. I wish with all my heart that the children in the future get the chance of a regular physiotherapy treatment. There is still much to do and I'm looking forward to the coming months :)

Many thanks for that goes first to my boss Axel Linke, which allows me here perform this wonderful work in Sri Lanka for a longer period.

**A very special thanks to all the lovely people, family and friends who like to give me support in this work - THANKS to all who give financially and humanly tight to me and my work and believe together with me in this project. This gives me the strength to go on.**

**The shortest distance between two people is a smile ... Smile and the world smiles back. Touching moments forever exist in our hearts.**

**THANK YOU**

Barbara Dietrich

(Physiotherapeutin-Craniosacraltherapeutin)

## **WE GO TO THE NEW 2013 COUNTER:**

At the end of the year 2012, we could share a good result regarding the physiotherapeutic project: Thanks to many donations we could from a solid grip and thus to a mobile organize dental clinic for two days, where all the children of the project got a dental examination, treatment and the necessary information for cleaning teeth and at the end they went home with toothbrush toothpaste. Of course you can not compare the equipment of local dentists with our dentists. But the children and parents took it gratefully and stayed on bravely on the not so modern dentist's chair.

Also, we could make an appointment with the orthopedic technician Herman Wendland based in Colombo who came to visit us in the center for a day. We could provide all the necessary children rehabilitation care. Some children get a complete Wheelchair supply of seats, fixing and desk mount, many a walker, a Stander, orthotics or shoes with inserts. Depending on the child everything was well measured and given in order. If all goes well, and all materials are found, the first Wheelchairs will come as early as 3 weeks. Again, I could like to emphazise that we can not compare the circumstances with the European



standard. Patience and flexibility are here at the first place in Sri Lanka. Everything takes a lot of time here, which the local people have more than enough. And I as a globetrotter have that now also out already. I am very pleased, to give the children not a perfect but at least appropriate for their circumstances events a reasonably good quality. It's not easy to make as many parents realize that with the appropriate **training a Wheelchair** also has positive sides and the child must not only be carried or hidden but also can be independent. For one or the other has become much easier through the walker to walk. Here in SL the parents carry the children constantly and everywhere. But slowly and surely, the families seem to this understand and accept. Dealing with disability is a sensitive issue in Sri Lanka.

Usually you don't see the children around the aerea because they are most in their houses. To me it is quite important to make parents and people here realize that even if the child has a disability it can reach targets for the future and a kind of independence. With the right understanding and the matching Help the children can go to school, for example, and also independently move. This is one of my many tasks here in Sri Lanka. **My effort seems to have sucess, because the growth and regular participation of Therapies speak for themselves. Currently it rains a lot here and usually people go in such weather not out the front door. But my children and their families are provided daily, reasonably punctual in the center and can not wait to start the treatment.** Motivated they proudly display their homework and exercises they get from me. I can not make a better compliment to the children. There are hardly any absences to mark and then if then because of illness. But then ,here we are so far that the dates which were even canceled we give a new date for the net time ... What I want more ...

At this point it is me again on the heart to thank all love people who give me help and support for this project from all sides.

I know this is greatly appreciated and will continue to hold on to this project and at their full capacity.

Together with my children who are now very close to my heart, we go every day a little step further forward ... and who knows, maybe arises sometime even much more ... I hope.

**Strive that everything you say comes from the heart.**

**Vincent de Paul**

In this sense, I am sending to all lovely greetings from Sri Lanka

Barbara



## FINAL REPORT 2013:

It is hard to believe ... four months in Sri Lanka have passed by very quickly and I can look back with pride and joy of a successful work. As described in previous reports, all children are supplied by rehabilitation materials. The **orthopedic technician Herman Wendland** has again looked and adjust at all the individuals of every single child. All families are very grateful and happy for the help. They can put their children finally in a wheelchair where they can practise active and in the meanwhile the mothers can do something else. Some of the children i taught wheelchair training and work diligently, they still are not used to the wheelchair.

I also visited the last two days all the children at home. **I ve been received very hospitable and unfortunately i had to realize with that some families live under very poor circumstances. Some household owns no electricity or water and a lack of bed, table or chairs. Therefore, I spontaneously decided to provide to these families Furniture. Some left donations could made that possible.** Each child and family has been supplied with "homework" from me. It is about Exercises in my absence, so that the physical achievements do not deteriorate and I can go on further with new concepts when i will be back.

The colleague **Julia Kastl** has agreed to support for two months, the **Physiotherapy Project**. After an intensive introduction to therapy she currently continued to treat some children in the center and also helped in some organizational things.

### **Thanks for your commitment!**

Furthermore, we have a little boy, called **Samith**, he needed a financial support of a very high - risk surgery. I personally met the responsible doctor who took care about and followed the entire process. The operation was not easy and involved with great pain. But the intervention has been successful and Samith is now out of the Hospital and soon he will begin with physiotherapy therapy.

At my visit at the hospital, I have unfortunately seen much misery ... even very young children with major neurological surgical procedures that do not care and are catastrophic conditions in the hospital. And the hygienic measures in the general hospital are not the best! Of course, with this experience immediately jumped on my "helper syndrome". **On my next visit to Sri Lanka I would like to offer directly help in the children's department,so the children would get the chance for an immediate physiotherapy care and they could later**



**continue in the Peraliya Health Centre.** For this I will meet with the chief physician of the hospital, and if I am lucky he is interested in the physiotherapy project. Still important is the intensive continuation of medical and dental supply of all disabled children in Peraliya Centre that we already started successfully this year. Music classes, art classes and intensive support of children with learning difficulties are still in development of my idea for the physiotherapy project. Not to forget is the collaboration between the University of Physiotherapy. This is another of my Focus promoting the physiotherapeutic project. Currently I have a student who presents itself regularly at the center for watching my Treatments. This I would love to continue because my idea is to **train local physiotherapists** and encourage to **help them in my project**. Thus, the children would get in the longer term a physiotherapy treatment. This is not so easy but very important because the disabled children in Sri Lanka has a limited or almost no possibility to get help offered. Accordingly, then the consequences are of which I have reported in the previous time. All the more important it is to me, the local students to do this consciously and this I would love to bring to the local PT students my way of work close to their heart. I was able to get the interest of the Director of the Department of Faculty of Physiotherapy - University of Colombo. My idea for the future is to organize seminars at the university and to even offer internships. To realize all these ideas of course I need financial and therapeutic Help. I know that I can provide still some more things for these children in Sri Lanka. It is often not easy and the work sometimes costs a lot of energy. But the bright eyes of children and the Smile that they give me every single day is reason enough reward for me to continue. There is still much to do ... and that brings me every day a step further ... I can not express with words how much these children are now close to my heart, and I may not say enough **THANK YOU** to everyone who believed and supported me and the project.

**Who uses words, is responsible for them.**

**An old adage says: "No matter what you say, it is important, that it arrives to you from the bottom of the heart.**

**The words have to be understood and have to touch the soul."**

In this sense...

Heart Regards,

Barbara

