

Dear friends of House of Encouragement

Our Christmas Story

About 3 years ago, we were able to report that Mpumi received a hearing aid for the first time at the age of 6, opening a new world for her. The child, practically deaf from birth, grew up with 2 older brothers with her grandmother after the early loss of her mother. She was left alone often as her granny had to work and withdrew into her own world. Communication was difficult although she tried hard with gestures and barely intelligible sounds. It was known that Mpumi could not hear very well but no one at that time realized that her speech problems were due to her practical deafness. A doctor examined the child several times and finally informed the grandmother that it was necessary to operate Mpumi on the larynx as this was supposed to be the reason why she could not speak.

Mpumi was a 1st grader and after a few months school she started attending our orphan care center. In spite of her disability, she was a cheerful and loving girl. When we heard that Mpumi was to be operated, we asked the grandmother for permission to get a second professional opinion. We took Mpumi to an Ear Institute where it was found that her hearing capacity on both sides was less than 10%. The specialists confirmed our assumption that the speech problems were primarily related to the hearing difficulties. They strongly recommended not to go through with the surgery and to wait for results with the hearing aid. However, we were told to be prepared for the fact that it will be extremely difficult for Mpumi, as a six-year-old, to learn a language for the first time in order to follow a normal school education. All efforts to find a private institute, where Mpumi could have been helped appropriately, failed.



Mpumi in grade one August 2014

However, we have seen how motivated and intelligent Mpumi is. When she was sent to the first class in January 2014, she practically could not speak. With the hearing aid as of August and therapeutic support, she made progress every week and showed that she was able to keep up with the class many times in tasks where language was not the focus. Nevertheless, it was understandable that she had to repeat grade 1. She understood more, but was unable to make complete sentences herself. It was still a problem in the classroom for Mpumi. From the same organisation that the hearing aid was sponsored, we were given a technical unit for teacher and learner with which Mpumi could understand the teacher at any time, irrespective of any disturbing noise around her.

Today, we are very proud of Mpumi and grateful for the amazing progress she has made. She has completed grade two and is - except for the subject language - a good student. She will be promoted to grade 3 in January 2017.

That this became reality we primarily owe to the eagerness and the unbroken will to learn of Mpumi. But also thanks to the loving help of our team, especially of Maria, who is her mentor and takes care of her.



Mpumi today before the transition to grade 3.

There is still a lot of work to be done which requires patience. But everyone agrees that her development is a real miracle.

The Primary School has made a commitment to grant additional tuition support for Mpumi as of 2017. Mpumi even masters the challenge of speaking Zulu to her grandmother, Sepedi in the classroom and sometimes English at our center. We can see how for the girl, who once was without any realistic chances for her future, doors are opening for an independent life.



Mpumi proudly comments the report of her School achievements to Maria.

But not only Mpumi is satisfied with her school report. Especially the smaller children have achieved significant improvement over the past terms in various subjects. They can hardly wait to show us their reports.





The progress of the smaller children in English is also due to the many stories, which the caregivers read to them in the cosy reading corner or our library. Questions around the stories are discussed in English with the learners.

Even if it does not look like a white Christmas here with 35 degrees, stories around the Christmas season are always very popular. From this loving atmosphere we send our warmest greetings to our faithful donors and thank you for all your support.

To all friends of House of Encouragement we wish a relaxing and blessed advent season and a lot of joy during the upcoming festivities.

With kind regards,

House of Encouragement

Walter und Estelle Bosshard