

# Balamitra Newsletter from August to October 2008

## Contents:

- **Arrival**
- **Classes the volunteers have taken**
- **Music class**
- **Music class**
- **Ganesha Festival**
- **Craft work**
- **The field visits**

## Arrival

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, three new volunteers from Germany arrived in Sagar Nagar, Visakhapatnam. As in the previous two years these new volunteers have come to India to work for one year at the Balamitra Model School. Anna Stellmacher, Josefine Reiks and Jan Paul Dollinger (from left to right) joined the children of Balamitra .



## Classes the volunteers have taken

All the volunteers are teaching the children English. Anna Stellmacher also teaches Drama, Music, Painting and Form Drawing in class III and IV. Josefine Reiks teaches Maths, Craft Work, Music and Form Drawing in class III, IV and V. Jan Paul Dollinger deals with Maths, Geography, Form Drawing, Craft Work, Geometry and Sports in class IV and V.

## Music class

Josefine is teaching class IV and V to play the flute. She teaches the children by listening, imitating and playing without teaching them notes, because tribal people are used to learning instruments by listening and feeling. The children are learning to play the song “Morning has come”, which is known to all of them.

In the other Music classes, taken by Anna and Josefine, the children are learning new songs to sing, for example the Hawaiian song “Jenny Mama” and the song “Twist again”.

## Ganesha Festival



On Sep 3<sup>rd</sup> we had the Festival of Ganesha. We celebrated this festival, which lasts ten days, by having a Puja for Lord Ganesha and by immersing the idols of the Lord into the ocean.

During the week before, the children had made their own Ganesha figures out of clay and on the day of the festival, all the beautiful figures were placed together with fruits, sweets, flowers and rice on a great altar. We then gathered together in front of the altar and we prayed and listened to

stories of the Lord Ganesha, the son of Shiva and Parvati.

After three days, all of us from the school went with the decorated Ganesha figures (all with a painted “bindi”) to the beach. During the procession to the ocean the children sang prayers to Lord Ganesha. We then immersed all the figures solemnly into the sea. Because we had made the figures ourselves out of clay, instead of buying them, it was a nonpolluting action and a great festival.

## Craft work

Together with class III Josefine has made kites and paper boxes with different shaped shells on them. Together with class IV and V Jan Paul has made Coconut Shell bowls with different paintings and designs on them.



## The field visits

From the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2008. Seetharamaraju, Simhachalam, Sivaratnam and the volunteer Jan Paul went for a regular field visit to the village schools in the Poolabanda region. The first out of the six villages they visited was the school in Buruguchattu. The children and teachers of the school were evaluated through simple tests. Attendance in the school that day and the weeks before were monitored. Mostly two thirds of the students attend the school regularly. The other children had to work in the fields with their parents. Raju and the training team tested the knowledge of the teacher and checked the health of the children. The children were mostly in good condition except for one student and one baby who had scabies.

The next villages they visited were Buradapadu, Bodichattu, Chidimetta, Junjuruwada and Poduguputta. There they did the same procedure.

After that they went to the resource center in Poolabanda.



### **Herbal medicine**

On Oct 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> Rajulamma, Josefine and the children of class V went to the tribal village “Poolabanda” to have lessons in herbal medicine there.

There they met Vemala Bhimanna, the medicine-man of Poolabanda.

Every tribal village has one of these medicine-men, who has a great knowledge of plants and their use, methods to prepare medicines for illnesses from fever to wounds. They take care of the people in their villages having no serious illnesses. If people in the tribal villages have serious illnesses, they are directed to go to the hospital. Rajulamma and Yerayamma, who live in the Balamitra School double up as nurses, take care and monitor the follow up treatments of children brought to the city. Their duties include taking care of the children’s health, looking after the sick people from the villages coming to Vizag and referring them to the city hospital. They take good personal care and monitor and follow up on the medical treatment in the hospitals and help them to understand their illness and their situation and to make the right decision, in case.

So class V, Rajulamma and Josefine went out to the fields together with Bhimanna, who has dreadlocks and wears orange clothes and looks really like the way you would imagine a medicine-man looks. He explained the group about 40 different plants, their names and what they could be used for and in which way. Josefine also took photos of these plants for making something like an information-book about tribal herbal medicine. Later Rajulamma and Bhimanna together wrote down all the information about the healing plants.

The children, Rajulamma and Josefine are going to prepare some of these herbal medicines by themselves.