



Dear friends of the THOMAS ENGEL-Foundation,

We are currently having aid projects in Eswatini, Tanzania and Ecuador. In this issue of the newsletter, we take a closer look at the current political situation in these countries, particularly in the article by Simone Knapp, who works for the Church Office for Southern Africa. Reading this information, you might well come to the conclusion that you don't want to help here (anymore). And to be honest: we would even have a certain amount of understanding, although we disagree. We question our work again and again:

Should we help at all?

Should we perhaps help differently?

We only ever have one answer to the first question: Yes

We help disadvantaged children and their environment. Why should these children pay for the mistakes and misdeeds of adults? For us, it is a moral obligation to alleviate the suffering of children as far as possible and to improve their lives in the long term. Please also read the following opinion of Kirsten

Boie, the well-known, multi-award-winning children's book author and chairwoman of the Möwenweg Foundation, with whom we have been cooperating for many years.

Possible answers to the second question are more multifaceted and complex. We, i.e. all those actively involved in the aid measures, are constantly scrutinizing our work and looking for improvements, some of which are then implemented. It is particularly helpful if changes are made measurable. We are striving for this and are already doing it to some extent. However,



reliable results can only be gathered over a longer period of time. More on this in a future issue of the newsletter.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who supports the work of the THOMAS ENGEL-foundation for their help. We wish you a peaceful Advent season, happy holidays and all the best for the New Year.

Best regards

Ernst Engel
Chairman of the Board

Bettina Haubner und Jaime Garcia
Deputy Chairs of the Board

The members of the advisory board of the THOMAS ENGEL-foundation

The board members of the three sponsoring associations

Freunde der THOMAS ENGEL-Stiftung Fulda e. V.

Freunde der THOMAS ENGEL-Stiftung Nastätten e. V.

Amigos de la Fundación THOMAS ENGEL in Ecuador

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Kirsten Boie – Why do we help Eswatini despite adverse circumstances



Kirsten Boie, Photo: Olaf Malzahn

The Litsemba (*hope*) project was launched in 2004 at the height of the AIDS pandemic, under a different name and financed by major international aid organizations that were trying to push back HIV in Africa. Half of the children in Eswatini no longer had parents and in the country itself the idea of *neighborhoods care points* (NCP's) was born, in which women from the community volunteer to care for orphaned children. Through LITSEMBA buildings were erected and the children were provided with food, warm clothing for the often cold winters, pre-school education and medical care. And for the volunteers there is the project of income-generating activities, which enables the women to earn their own income – which also strengthens their position in the community. In the meantime the international aid organizations have withdrawn. At the NCP's "only" between 10 and 20% of the children are still without parents, but the others all live in extreme poverty, the likes of which we can hardly imagine. For many of them the meal at Litsemba is the only meal of the day.

Under these conditions the question of why we remain active in the country even under critical political circumstances does not arise for the THOMAS ENGEL-foundation and the *Möwenweg foundation*: for many children it is a matter of survival; it is a matter of the right to health care; and it is a matter of education: because the level of education of those who are Eswatini children today also depends on the democratic development of the country. Autocracies and dictatorships have always tried to keep the education of the general population to a minimum, also in order to prevent enlightenment and resistance. With LITSEMBA, we want to do the opposite.

Kirsten Boie, Chairwoman of the *Möwenweg Foundation*

Simone Knapp: Eswatini - Monarchy without human rights

Seven months have passed since the murder of human rights activist and lawyer Thulani Maseko. He campaigned for human rights to be respected in Eswatini and paid for this with his life, having previously been imprisoned for his critical statements. He was also the one who questioned the renaming of the country from Swaziland to Eswatini as the sole decision of the king and challenged it in court. At the time of his assassination, Maseko was chairman of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, a group of political parties and civil society groups campaigning for democratic reforms in the country.



Photo: Lolo Phiri - riots in Eswatini

Since 2018, there have been protests against the lavish lifestyle of the royal family and the widespread misuse of public funds. King Mswati III is Africa's last absolute monarch, who has been in power since 1986 and regards the country, its resources and its people as his private property. The protests escalated during the pandemic and peaked in June 2021, when more than 80 people were killed and hundreds injured or imprisoned. The protesters are demanding political reforms, real democracy and are at risk of being harassed, arrested and persecuted. Two MPs, Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza and Mthandeni Dube, were arrested in 2021 for advocating for more democracy - how ironic - and have been in prison ever since.

The young generation taking to the streets here is no longer prepared to accept the dramatic situation in the country. According to the World Bank, 55% were living below the poverty line of USD 3.65 per day for middle-income countries - and Eswatini is counted as such - in 2022. The lavish lifestyle of Mswati III and his family, publicly flaunted on social media, stands in stark contrast to this and contributes to social tensions.

Although the country has theoretically made progress in providing state infrastructure such as food, water, housing, education and health, this is from an extremely low base. At the same time, however, people's perceptions have changed, as the *Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG)* shows: They are significantly less satisfied with the state and the economy, the human rights situation, gender equality and the provision of social services than in 2017. And they are particularly dissatisfied with the unreasonable restrictions on their freedoms, such as freedom of association and assembly, as the authorities are stepping up their use of the 2008 Suppression of Terrorism Act and a colonial-era law to silence activists and political opposition.

Eswatini is a good example of how the violation of social and economic rights is linked to the violation of civil and political rights. Due to poverty, lack of jobs, food and adequate housing, young people in particular are calling for a change in the country's leadership. They are calling for an open dialog for more democracy, for more participation in the country's future and no sham elections that set up a shadow parliament whose decisions can be overturned by the king's right of veto. They are calling for development that resonates with them and not just mere numbers games that make the country look good as a middle-income country, for example. But they won't be able to do this without outside help. As in many societies, young people have no voice and their future is being gambled away. This starts in childhood: without sufficient healthy food, children cannot develop their full potential, without good education and schooling, the country will never change. An investment in young people is an investment in the future. This needs our support and our solidarity.



f.l.t.r.: Stephanie Müller-Trost, Jacob Freiherr von Perger, Dr. Barbara Jörg, Ernst und Agnes Engel



f.l.t.r.: Jonathan Neulen, Anette Rothländer, Dr. Michael Rothländer, Norbert Hißnauer, Martin Mengringhaus, Ellen Hißnauer, Michael Karger, Antje Mengringhaus, Manja Karger, Katrin Menzel, Jan Menzel



Simone Knapp
Simone Knapp is a consultant for the Kirchliche Arbeitsstelle Südliches Afrika KASA and managing director of Werkstatt Ökonomie, to which KASA belongs.

A total of 17 people unanimously reported how warmly and enthusiastically they were welcomed by the staff of the LITSEMBA aid project and guided to various aid measures, often under the most difficult conditions in the most remote areas of the country. "We first have to process the impressions we have gathered, it's not easy," was the unanimous opinion of the travelers. They are all more convinced than ever that the LITSEMBA aid project, run by our renowned local implementation partner **Young Heroes**, is worthy of trust and support.

Eswatini - Impressions from the last project trips

On 29.09.2023, members of the Friends of the THOMAS ENGEL-foundation Fulda e. V. and Ligowane e. V. set off on a 10-day trip to Eswatini, accompanied by the photographer Arlet Ulfers, who works mainly as a freelancer for the Süddeutsche Zeitung. She did this for us on a voluntary basis. We, a total of six people, were a great, harmonious and mutually complementary team.

As was the 11-strong group from the Friends of the THOMAS ENGEL-foundation Nastätten e. V., who traveled to Eswatini a week later to gain an impression of the aid measures on site.

"We first have to process the impressions we've gathered, that's not easy."





Pictures left and above:
90-year-old Thema Dlamini and her
descendants urgently need a solid
house



1. vegetable growing, an income-generating measure for the volunteer caregivers in the Neighborhood Care Points (NCPs)
2. Dzakasini NCP: large crowds visiting the Mobile Clinic
3. Vaccination, not very pleasant
4. Dr. Barbara Jörg in conversation with the HIV tester
5. A 3-room house was built for grandmother Neliya Mamba and 16 children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren
6. Members of the LITSEMBA team



Photographer Arlet Ulfers

Tanzania - Five years of voluntary, meaningful work



This East African country is home to around 63 million people living on 945,000 km². Arusha is the third largest city in the country and the base of operations of Take a Malaika e. V. and the newly founded international NGO Home of Malaika - House of Angels.

Following the death of President John Magufuli, the political climate has improved significantly under the new head of state, Samia Suluhu-Hassan. The president announced a constitutional reform to strengthen democracy and is focusing on values such as international cooperation, freedom of the press and freedom of expression, and strengthening infrastructure and the economy. It reads well, hopefully the words will be followed by sustainable action.

We still suffer greatly from the often short-term changes in regulations, which makes longer-term planning almost impossible. Examples:

- Changing hygiene regulations for the remedial classes or the number of children cared for a certain number of places were met, among other things by renting a second property. We have now learned that afternoon care is only permitted in state schools, and we are still in the process of clarifying this with the authorities, as we believe that our afternoon care is not only better, but also significantly more cost-effective. Many families cannot afford state care.
- It is still common practice in large parts of society, including schools, not to raise children without violence. We reject this and that is why hitting is also prohibited at Home of Malaika. Because four teachers did not comply with the ban, we had to dismiss them, unfortunately in return for a severance payment. We are very grateful to the THOMAS ENGEL-foundation for supporting us morally and financially in this difficult situation.

Despite difficulties and setbacks, one look into the eyes of the children and women is enough to reassure us that our work in Tanzania is right and important. Here is a reminder of our specific aid measures:

- **Sewing and creative project:** women learn machine sewing and other creative skills. The finished products are sold locally, but also at markets and festivals in Germany.

- **Sponsorship project:** This means afternoon care at school and promotion as well as financial support for health insurance, school uniforms and materials.
- **Family Friends Project:** Families from difficult social and economic backgrounds are supported for 3 years to improve their living conditions and set up their own business.
- **Ulinzi-wa-kike (protection of women) project:** At various public schools, schoolgirls are taught how to sew reusable sanitary towels and learn about monthly hygiene.
- **Anti-violence program at schools:** This is still being planned together with the University of Bielefeld. A concept already exists, as does the song "Pigma ngoma - we beat the drum, not children", which was rehearsed by children.

The Take a Malaika e. V. and Home of Malaika team would like to thank the THOMAS ENGEL- foundation for its many years of fantastic support and we look forward to further exciting joint projects for the people of Arusha, Tanzania.

Benjamin Leonardt,

Deputy Chairman "Take a Malaika e. V."



Ecuador - Political background and aid measures

A new congress was elected on 20. 08. 2023. The previous president, Guillermo Lasso, who belonged to the conservative party, and his government were blocked by the socialists. This was one reason why the hoped-for improvement in the extremely poor economic situation did not materialize and new elections were held, from which the 37-year-old entrepreneur's son Daniel Noboa emerged after a run-off election in October. His political orientation is considered to be "center-right". He has declared war on drug trafficking, as Ecuador is considered a stronghold of drug trafficking in South America and no longer a safe, sunny vacation paradise.

During the election campaign in August, presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio was shot dead during a speech in the capital Quito. He wanted to fight corruption.

The **Melvin Jones facility for the disabled** is suffering from the authorities' decision to promote inclusion. In Ecuador, this means enabling physically and mentally disabled children to attend public schools. Parents have to pay for school uniforms, backpacks and writing materials. However, the disabled children are not supported separately and therefore do not or hardly benefit from attending school. A blind child, for example, sits in the classroom and at best follows the lessons acoustically. Insiders sarcastically call this form of inclusion "baby sitting".

The Melvin Jones facility charges fees for the education/treatment of children. The result of this government decision is that the number of children at the Melvin Jones facility is declining, it can no longer cover its costs and is more dependent than ever on donations, primarily from the THOMAS ENGEL-foundation and the group of donors around Dr. Britta Kellermann.

Helping Kids in Ecuador (HKIE) has been supported by the THOMAS ENGEL-foundation for years. This American aid organization has now enabled more than 1,000 children from poor backgrounds to have vital operations performed free of charge by recognized local doctors. The hospitals in the network only charge their actual costs, which are borne by HKIE.

The **Amigos de la Fundación THOMAS ENGEL** support poor families in the province of Santa Elena by providing school materials, by continuing to support particularly gifted children and by covering the costs of medical therapies, as well as for the construction or completion of houses to replace dilapidated huts made of bamboo and corrugated iron.

To date, Amigos have also granted 239 interest-free mini-loans averaging USD 300 with a volume of USD 68,000 to men and women to start up and secure their own businesses. The impressive repayment rate is more than 99%. Business examples include running snack bars and repair workshops, manufacturing and selling shoes, clothing, handicrafts made from "vegetable ivory", a special nut, trading in fish and second-hand textiles, farming (maize, cucumbers, peppers and passion fruit) and producing and selling food from coconuts.

In the next issue of the newsletter we will report in more detail and with pictures on examples of these undertakings.

Personnel changes on the advisory board of the THOMAS ENGEL-foundation

The foundation's advisory board is both advisory and supportive. Both are very important and helpful. The aid projects have grown over the years and, proportionally, so has the foundation's work, which is carried out exclusively on a voluntary basis. For this reason, the Foundation's Board of Directors is delighted to have this highly welcome, competent reinforcement.



Front f.l.t.r.: Dr. Barbara Jörg, Ingrid Britz-Averkamp (Beiratsvorsitzende), Stephanie Müller-Trost; back f.l.t.r.: Jan Menzel, Rüdiger Gries. Missing: Stephan Coester.

TERMINE

Freunde der THOMAS ENGEL-Stiftung Fulda e. V.

- 09.12.2023** Weihnachtsbaumverkauf zusammen mit dem Haimbacher SV auf dem Sportgelände des HSV in Fulda-Haimbach bei vorweihnachtlichem Ambiente mit Glühwein, Würstchen, Waffeln und mehr
- 23.02.2024** Mitgliederversammlung im Hotel Am Dom, Fulda
- 26.10.2024** 19:00 Uhr, "ovationen 2024" im Fürstensaal des Stadtschlusses, Fulda

Freunde der THOMAS ENGEL-Stiftung Nastätten e. V.

- 02./03.12.23** "Weihnachtsstraße" in Nastätten
- 06.01.2024** 19:00 Uhr, Neujahrskonzert der Rhein-Lahn-Philharmonie im Bürgerhaus in Miehlen
- 16.01.2024** 19:00 Uhr, Jahreshauptversammlung im Rathaus in Buch
- 08.03.2024** 19:00 Uhr, "ovationen 2024" im Bürgerhaus in Nastätten
- 01.09.2024** Offener Garten in Nastätten

Weitere Termine siehe www.thomasengel-stiftung.org



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