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December 2013

News

EDITION 36 - Twice a year with news from Cusco en Nederland!



Dear Niños donors and friends,

2013 is nearly at its end and so it seems like an appropriate time to reflect on a year of unexpected challenges, heartwarming experiences and promising developments. There is one thing we are sure of at the moment: we have a strong confidence in the new year to come and are excited to see what 2014 will bring!

Unlike previous newsletters, in this edition we chose to focus on the personal story of a 17-year old boy named Grimaldo. We are very happy that he was willing to show us a glimpse of his personal life and open to the idea of sharing his story with you all. Grimaldo's daily life represents the challenges our children and youngsters have to face on a daily basis. Please know that without your help we would not be able to do our work and provide constant support to our children and youngsters. Thank you very much.

The work of the Niños Foundation

The Niños Foundation focuses on a part of the population in Cusco that has little or no chance to live a good, stable and healthy life. Most of the children are alone in facing distressing family circumstances and literally crave for some guidance, warmth and love. Their daily meal is nothing more than a watery cup of soup and some potatoes. They have no warm shelter, no hot shower or streaming water and in most cases not even a bed to sleep in. The Niños Foundation was set up to support the development of these children. We provide them with a daily nutrient-rich meal so that the children can feel stronger and have better concentration at school. As we do not work with volunteers, we provide as much work as possible to the local poor community, so that they receive some extra income, in addition to the little money they earn on the streets. We also provide social and psychological support for our children and employees, to let them express concerns and aspirations and create an environment where people learn to listen and show respect towards each other. These are seemingly small things but, in the end,

often turn out to be the most important aspects in life.

Sustainable & social entrepreneurship

This year we started to focus on our Triple Win ideology, in which the producer, the buyer, and the support for our niños connect in a healthy and sustainable circle. With this ideology in mind, we recently started to sell local and handmade products such as scarves, hats and alpaca rugs in our Niños Hotels. It was an instant hit, so we decided to broaden our perspective to the international market and are now happy to announce our recently opened Niños Webshop. Naturally, 100% of the webshops profit is donated to the Niños Foundation and thus goes directly to the children and youngsters. With a purchase, you help us to continuously grow stronger and less dependent on donations in the future. Read more about our Niños webshop in this newsletter.

Youth Project: the story of Grimaldo

As you may know, we recently started a youth project for youngsters aged 12-18, who wish to continue an education after primary school. High school is not compulsory in Peru and it is a fact that many families from the poorest part of the population simply cannot afford any form of higher school education for their children. In addition, the youngsters are expected to earn some extra money to feed their families. Unfortunately, by lacking good education and experience, their 'work' is never lucrative nor does it improve their situation for the future. The youngsters face a life on the streets polishing shoes or selling screws, handkerchiefs, boiled eggs, homemade paintings – basically anything they can think of...knowing that

they face real competition on the streets with hundreds of other street children trying to earn a cent or two on the streets as well. These jobs are desperate attempts which will never lead to an improvement of their situation.

Fortunately, we often get feedback that the support from our projects have a great affect on an entire family. Providing food for the children helps parents to have fewer daily expenses for the rest of their family. The medical support helps the children to overcome vitamin deficiencies and skin or lung diseases. In addition, the parents tell us that the children are simply happier, more confident, and self aware because they find social support within the Niños project. The peaceful environment allows them to create new friendships and find a calm space (and a real table and chair!) to do their homework. As a result, they are able to concentrate and perform better at school. We all know how education opens new doors to a better future...

In the summer of 2013, Zita - our representative from the Netherlands - had the chance to visit the Niños Project in Cusco. She also participated in the youth project and had a frank conversation with 17-year-old Grimaldo. He invited her to visit his home and meet his mother. Zita has written an article about this impressive experience, which provides a solid overview as to why the youth project is so indispensable.

*Jolanda van den Berg
& the Niños Team*

*We wish you all
a happy Christmas
and a wonderful 2014!*



YOUTH PROJECT: THE STORY OF GRIMALDO

(written by Zita)

Grimaldo (17 years)

School: 5th year of secondary school

Dream job: cook

Home situation : lives in a suburb of Cusco with his mother and two younger sisters. Father works in the countryside or in construction work. Therefore, he is rarely at home with his family.



Today I am visiting the youth project that is situated in one of the children's restaurants in the Niños Hotel on Calle de Fierro. Jolanda is accompanying me. As we enter the building, a group of adolescents peek curiously at this Dutch newcomer, but shortly after Jolanda introduces me to the group, the ice seems to melt. I hear "Ola Zita!" from all sides and suddenly it seems as if I have been visiting the project for years. I mingle into the group and get to spend a very pleasant afternoon with the youngsters playing basketball, dancing to Peruvian pop music and discussing math homework.

The young people all seem very cheerful and happy. But I know that behind this apparently beautiful 'outside', a harsh reality is hidden. We start to talk with Grimaldo, a 17-year-old boy, and ask him if he would like to share his story. He happily agrees.

We sit down at a table in the patio of the hotel. Grimaldo immediately starts to tell his story about his childhood, his present daily life, and his plans and dreams for the future. It's obvious he has a very clear

vision on what his dream job would be: he wants to be a cook, specialized in typical Peruvian dishes. He enthusiastically starts to explain about how he envisions his food creations. How he wants to present his meals in a real fancy restaurant. How all meals should be prepared with real passion and love for the ingredients. The ultimate goal for Grimaldo would be to start a restaurant chain similar to the famous Peruvian cook Gaston Acurio. Jolanda explains to me later that they recognized Grimaldo's passion for food during the Niños chocolate workshop. The delicious chocolates and biscuits, which he co-created, are now greatly appreciated by many customers in our pastry shop.

As a child, Grimaldo entered the Niños project and got in touch with various food dishes for the first time. This showed him that there are more meals than just what he was used to at that time (which was mainly soup, potatoes, carrots, and if lucky some guinea pig, chicken or an egg). Before the Niños period, he was very often sitting home alone and the food was scarce. During that time, he could not concentrate on his homework because he was constantly feeling hungry. Apart from that, the family did not possess a good table to eat at or chair to sit on. When he entered the Niños program, he started to make friends, felt happier, stronger and more at ease which also led to a better concentration at school.

While Grimaldo is talking, I take a peek at his clean blue school uniform, I see his radiant face, his happy curious eyes and I feel his enthusiasm about life and the future. A life in poverty does not seem to fit into this picture. I start to wonder how those two lives are combined within this one person. But less than two hours later, I experience the other side...

Grimaldo has to walk down a hill for about half an hour and then has to take a 40 minute bus ride to travel all the way to school and the Niños project. In the morning, he visits the Niños program. The secondary school is in the afternoon.

Today Jolanda, Yoryet (one of the youth counselors) and I are accompanying Grimaldo on his way back home. The steep staircase that brings him up the hill quickly gives way to a sandy path along houses of stone and clay. We walk past chickens and goats that are strapped to the front door of the houses. We step along debris and plastic waste. I wonder how this path would look like during the heavy rainy seasons. Halfway up the hill we encounter two children from the Niños program,

who are happy to accompany us on our way further up the hill. We are literally panting like dogs as Grimaldo lets us stop and turn around, where a beautiful breathtaking view on the city of Cusco appears in front of our eyes. It reminds me of the famous favelas in Rio de Janeiro, where the slums crawl up the dangerous steep hills and mountains, but in doing so have enviable views over the city. We turn around and continue our trek higher up the hill.

At the end of the path, actually on the upper tip of the district, we arrive at the house of Grimaldo and his family. As soon as the door opens, a dog and a few chickens run out of the house, shortly followed by Grimaldo's mother. We are happy to see that she is pleased with our visit. Grimaldo verifies if he can invite us into the house and the mother gets visibly excited but quickly runs inside to clean up a little. In the meanwhile we turn around and are again overwhelmed by the astonishing view of Cusco and the Andes mountains. Shortly after, we are welcomed into the living room (alias kitchen) of the house. I am quite shocked by the experience of the room of approximately 8m², with clay walls and a sandy floor that are blackened by a small rusty wood stove. The kitchen has neither sink nor running water, there is no window and the doorway has no actual door. I remember the cold winter nights and cannot imagine how cold it must be to live in these circumstances. On the floor I find dozens of guinea pigs crawling around. A few chickens and the dog are sent outside to the little courtyard. There is no table or real chair, plate or cutlery. It is impossible to speak of hygiene, the feces of guinea pigs are lying on the ground floor, the kitchen is full of plastic bottles, buckets, a visibly broken radio and some food left overs. We sit on a mud bench and a low stool. The mother tells us she feels sorry not to have prepared some food for us, as she clearly would like to show her appreciation, if only with some cooked potatoes. We make sure she does not worry about that and then she starts to explain the candid story of her life on the hill. Grimaldo is sitting next to me and listens silently, nodding every now and then to the story of his mother. The situation is a striking contrast with the image that I got earlier in the children's restaurant.

The mother is clearly happy to finally have a sympathetic ear for her story. To have a distraction from the lonely life on the hills. She talks about her husband who works in the countryside, far away in another province about 16 hours from Cusco.



Sometimes he is lucky and finds a project in the more lucrative construction work. The money he earns covers about the costs of a daily meal for himself. Every two months he travels home and tries to bring some extra money for his family. Most of the time, the amount is no more than a few hundred Sol (to get a glimpse: 100 sol is about 25 euros / 35 US Dollar). Because the children had the chance to participate in the Niños program, the mother was able to save some money to buy a piece of land on the top of the hill on the outskirts of Cusco. Together with his parents, Grimaldo participated in building the half-clay, half stone house. The mother is proud that every child has a private room, which in most of the poorer families is certainly not the case. When we ask to see Grimaldo's room, he reacts uncomfortably. We suspect that there is not much to see, likely not even a bed or any other kind of comfort. We respect that Grimaldo prefers not to share this with us.

To earn some extra money, the mother decided to built three extra rooms that are now rented out to students. Per room she earns approximately 20-30 Sol per month,

just enough for the mother to be able to prepare the watery soup with some extra additions, such as potatoes and carrots from her own piece of land. And if it is really a special occasion, she prepares some extra meat from one of her guinea pigs or chickens. It is clear that what I see at Grimaldo's home is a farm life with an urban translation.

Then the mother explains how she is not able to work a full time job as she is suffering from a pulmonary disease. I look around in the kitchen at the black walls created by the wood stove that visibly has no exhaust to the outside. To me it seems cramped and unhealthy to cook here on



a daily base. It is obvious that the focus and hope for a better future lies with the children. The mother explains excitedly how very pleased she is with the excellent school results of Grimaldo and his obvious drive to become a cook. We know that her middle daughter Jessica is also a bright girl, as she is part of the youth project as well. For the youngest daughter

Mary, the mother happily managed to provide a good education at a private school. But there is a striking condition for this admission: as the mother is not able to pay the tuition fee of 170 Sol a month, she has to clean the school for two hours a day, five days a week, which, with her disease, is a heavy job she is facing on a daily basis. In return, her daughter has to stay on an excellent level, with allowed scores of only 17+ of 20. If she fails in achieving these scores, she needs to leave the school. I cannot imagine the pressure that this situation must put on this girl, knowing that without her doing extremely well at school, she will not have any future education anymore. Sometimes life seems very unfair.

Back at the Niños Hotel I sit down to let all experiences sink in and put it on paper immediately. I realize that what I have seen today shows the essence of the Niños projects. Within the program, teens like Grimaldo find the support, self-awareness and confidence that there is a chance to outgrow the poverty and distressing circumstances their family had to live with for generations. The children and youngsters are offered a chance to learn that with respect for each other and a passionate will you can change your world. That by rolling up your sleeves and getting started, you may pursue your dreams. The warm atmosphere of the Niños group, the nutrient-rich meal and hot showers, the support and calm place to concentrate on homework, and the opportunity to follow practical workshops...it all provides a little help and thus gives Grimaldo and others a hope for a better future.

FEATURE FILM ABOUT THE STORY OF JOLANDA

Board member Karen Holst Pellekaan is a screenwriter (including Loenatik, Eighth Graders Do Not Cry, The Happy Housewife, Jackie). Through her work for the Foundation, Karen was so amazed by the story of Jolanda and her child programs in Peru that she decided to use it as an inspiration for a new feature film. Of course this was set up with the cooperation and consent of Jolanda herself. This year, Karen and her co-writer Marnie Blok, were granted a subsidy by the Dutch Film Fund to write the script. The realization and financing of a film is a long term project, but the grant itself is a very important first step that we are all very excited about. It would be fantastic if in the next few years we could develop an exciting, emotional and heartbreaking movie about neglected street children, inspired on the story and experiences of Jolanda's life. Naturally, we will keep you informed about all further developments.



THE LATEST TRIPLE-WIN CONCEPT: THE NIÑOS WEB- SHOP

In our last newsletter (June 2013), we mentioned our new corporate ideology called 'Triple Win' for the first time. This vision helps us to focus and develop our businesses and foundation work into a socially relevant, sustainable and healthy organization. The Triple Win Ideology consists of the following steps:

PROFIT 1 - local craftsmen and businesses receive an extra income at a fair price
PROFIT 2 - our products make the clients and customers happy and feel good about their purchase

PROFIT 3 - 100% of the income goes directly to the foundation and thus directly to the support of our children and youngsters

Halfway through 2013, Jolanda learned about the beautiful handmade scarves and hats of handcraft weaver Gabriela and handcraft knitter Herlinda. Jolanda liked their handmade products so much that she immediately proposed to develop a special range of products to sell in the Niños Hotels. Soon after, she found out that the beautiful winter accessories

were selling like hot cakes. Herlinda and Gabriela were very happy with this extra work because they could generate extra income for their family. Also, for the Niños Foundation, this new trade led to additional funds to help the children and youngsters. The sale of the products turned out to be a wonderful example of the Triple Win vision. We immediately saw extra potential in expanding the market and targeting a bigger audience outside of Peru, so we investigated the possibility of selling the products online. The idea of the Niños Webshop was born in the summer of 2013... and we are very happy to announce that our Niños webshop has been launched in November 2013.

The accompanying photographs give an impression of our beautiful collection of colorful scarves and blankets. Hervé, our photographer, decided to organize a real photo shoot with some of our kids and youngsters. They loved to have this opportunity to dress up and step into the spotlight of a real photo shoot. They decided to put on make-up and even created angels wings. The shoot was absolutely great fun and the kids are looking forward to many more to come!

Please visit our shop at:

webshop.stichtingninos.com



News from our office:

SOCKS AND UNDERWEAR

If you have friends/family who are going to Cusco and who want to take something with them to help us with our project, please let them take with them children's underwear and socks. This will please them enormously.

KLM FLYING BLUE MILES

The Niños Foundation is part of the KLM Program 'AirCares', to whom you can donate your Flying Blue Award Miles (from 3.000 miles). With your donated Award Miles we save traveling costs and the savings go directly to our child and youth activities.

If you wish to donate your Award Miles, you can contact the Flying Blue Service Centre: 0900 - 040 0252 (€0,10 per minute). Please mention that you want to donate the charity program called 'KLM AirCares/Niños Foundation'. Make sure you have your Flying Blue code with you when making a donation.

APPEAL FOR E-MAIL ADDRESSES

We send this letter via e-mail to more than 2500 donors, but also about 1500

donors still receive it by post. Therefore we are very interested in your e-mail address so that we can send you our newsletter digitally. This saves the Foundation money for paper, copying and postage. By saving in this manner we can do something extra for our children in Peru and at the same time help our environment.

You can subscribe to the digital newsletter via info@stichtingninos.com, stating your name and postal address. Many thanks in advance!

AUTOMATIC COLLECTION

More than 1200 donors have authorized us to automatically cash their donation. This is for you as well as for us an easy way to pay your contribution and it saves us a lot of administrative work. Many others transfer the money themselves straight to our bank account. If you should wish to have your contribution sent to us automatically, please let us know by sending an e-mail to info@stichtingninos.com.

We will then send you the necessary form.

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