

25.11.2009

16th Christmas Letter  
Year End Review 2009

To all the children and their families  
our adoption applicants  
our colleagues  
and all friends and supporters of our work  
we wish you a very

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.**



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Do not tire  
but just hold the miracle  
softly  
like a bird  
in your hand.  
Hilde Domin  
(1909 – 2006)

*Do not tire* – these words should inspire courage and confidence, they should open ones eyes to positive things, bring strength both in emotional distress and also in the anticipation of a joyous event. They bring to mind hope and optimism. Everyone can interpret this short poem in their own way. We hope that both you and we are able to embrace this positive life attitude. It can drive away worry and fear and bring energy and joy.

### **The Waiting Period.**

For the first time this year we began to ask returning parents to complete a questionnaire on the effects of the waiting period. We wanted to gain an insight into the individual strategies they used to successfully come through this period and also to identify which of our actions were considered comforting or helpful. Waiting is a burdensome condition during which time many negative thoughts can find their way into your thoughts, for instance "our file has gone missing", "other couples have preference" and even "by the time its our turn no one will need us". But happily positive thoughts also come to mind, "it doesn't matter how long we wait, but for whom"; "the more precious something is the more difficult it is to attain".

Confucius; He who knows his goal can decide. He who decides finds peace.

The waiting period, as we reach for something so desired, springs to mind in many different everyday situations, whether in a traffic jam, in the doctor's waiting room or in a queue. But just consider this thought; if you believe that your hopes and expectations will be fulfilled then the waiting period will pass far more calmly than if you have no trust in the outcome of the process.

For the first time in our experience we have had applicants give up because of the length of the waiting period. Either as a deliberately set cut-off point to end the stress of being at fate's mercy or simply as a result of fatigue and exhaustion. Some were no longer overjoyed when they received the news that they were to become parents. However, having come this far they were incapable of immediately saying "no"; just holding the documents in their hand, the photograph, the face of a child, without feeling a thing. On no account have these people had it easy. We have sensed their doubts, their dizziness and their pain. And sometimes, despite intensive support and encouragement, nothing could be altered. Eleven children, an enormously high number, only found parents at the second attempt.

You can imagine that we find such experiences extremely alarming. Therefore we have begun to invite applicants to come and meet with us during the waiting period to make sure that they stand wholeheartedly behind their plans. These meetings are independent of and supplementary to the adoption applicant and parents meetings, they are a time consuming but wholly worthwhile exercise. Making waiting period support more personalised is, however, an almost impossible task considering the current economic climate. We therefore hope that the additional refreshment courses that are scheduled will be better attended. We have had positive feedback from seminar attendees who have commented on how they have profited from them. One example:

*Dear AdA team,*

*We wanted to let you know how much the seminar of 2 weeks ago helped us and how enjoyable it was. In the strenuous situation that we adoption applicants find ourselves participation in such seminars makes very good sense. Held in small groups led by the wonderful Mr. Stapelmann and conducted in the ambiance of the Ammersee – simply very well done.*

We certainly hope that the seminar attendance will grow and anticipate that it will. You should consider the waiting period not as a problem, rather as a chance to prepare yourself well. The long waiting period is not a problem specific to AdA, it affects the entire development of international adoption agencies.

We would be happy to develop regional networks. In some cities it has already been possible for adoptive families or applicants to meet intermittently to provide mutual advice and support, sometimes with the participation of subject experts.

It is very important to us that we earn your trust. We want to achieve that by open and frank discussion of our problems and complete transparency in all we do. Every single adoptive family among you is witness to and has taken responsibility for a legal process. Your letters of encouragement are not only of great help to other applicants but they also serve as witness to our good reputation, distinguishes us in the eyes of our partner countries at international adoption events and throws a positive light on every adoption successfully mediated by AdA.

### **Country Specific Information.**

#### **Colombia.**

##### **SummerNest**

In 2008 we initiated an extremely exciting project called Kidsave Germany. After all of the children taking part in the 2009 pilot project successfully found loving parents we immediately entered into long and demanding discussions both with our supervisors and with external experts. We are now confident that we have the knowledge and preparation to fulfil the conditions set and enable older, more difficult to place children to visit Germany. This time next year we hope to be able to look back upon a successful first execution of project SummerNest.

#### **We Are Looking For Parents.**

Apart from children difficult to place due to their age there is also another group for whom we are seeking parents; children with health difficulties or children who, due to poor nutrition, premature birth or poor care carry a high health risk. Siblings of three or more children also have a difficult time in finding people willing to become their parents. Contact us if you wish to learn more about our experience with children at risk.

#### **The Conflict between Venezuela and Colombia.**

For some time now the escalation of the border conflict between Colombia and Venezuela has been reported in the press and on the internet. On October 11<sup>th</sup> a football team was kidnapped from the Venezuelan side of the border. Two weeks later the players were executed: nine Colombians, one Peruvian and one Venezuelan. Since then a kind of cold war has existed between the two countries and diplomatic ties have been severed. According to international press reports this is due to a war between the right wing paramilitary in Colombia, the ACU, who are mostly funded by smuggling fuel out of Venezuela, and a left wing Venezuelan gorilla group called the

*Fuerzas Bolivarianas de Liberación* (Boliches), who evidently support the Chávez government. The most recent incidents were the blowing up of two boarder crossing footbridges and the capture of a female Colombian terrorist in Venezuela who, according to Chávez was also acting in cooperation with the Colombian government. Seven military bases on the Colombian side of the boarder, partly manned by US troops, were declared by both sides as an escalation of the situation. In contrast to the Venezuelan government who reacted aggressively and provocatively, the Colombian government, with strong support from the US, showed restraint and were open for discussion.

With the exception of the Colombian boarder region of Norte de Santander and the regional capital of Cúcuta, which lies 660km north of Bogotá, the rest of the country shows no visible sign of the warlike state of affairs.

### **Honduras.**

We have gained special authorization for Honduras from November 2009. That means that we can accept adoption applications for this country with immediate effect. However, it is important to state that international adoptions out of Honduras has been significantly reduced. We will see how the cooperation with this country develops. Following our visit we remain confident that this new cooperation will prove to be competent and carried out in a transparent and professional manner.

### **Dominican Republic.**

We have officially applied to the Dominican Republic for recognition as a partner for international adoptions. However, the mood towards Germany as a host country for Dominican children is currently very poor. This follows a child trafficking incident in which German authorities did not feel in the position to identify and judicially declare improper the parent – child relationship formed by the adoption ruling. Furthermore, against the recommendation of consulting experts, the adoption was consolidated. Given the fact that the Dominican Republic is a very young free state Germany seems to have taken a very questionable role which does not set a good example of law enforcement to contracting states. We hope that this incident has not closed the door for us, (and therefore also for you), to future professional and correct cooperation with the Dominican Republic which will prevent such incidents. We shall keep you informed.

### **Bolivia.**

The Catholic Women social service will discontinue their activities as an international adoption agency at the end of 2010. Bolivia, among others, is one of their partner countries. As we have the necessary local knowledge and reliable contacts in Bolivia we will start negotiations with the responsible bodies to gain recognition. As we already have registered association status since 2008 we already fulfil an important prerequisite.

### **El Salvador.**

We have had the approval for cooperation with El Salvador from their side for over a year. Due to time constraints we have not yet applied to the regulatory authority in Germany to verify our cooperation with this member of the Hague Convention on International Adoption. We are confident that the coming year will give us the time we need for the application.

### **Vietnam.**

There have been several changes in Vietnam where Dr Long is no longer responsible for international adoption. Also Mr Pham, the director of the orphanage BiVi is no longer active having taken retirement. It is hoped that Vietnam will strengthen efforts to implement the Hague Convention on International Adoption giving us the possibility to restart adoption activities in Vietnam.

### **Chechnya.**

A delegation from Chechnya visited us from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of March this year. On the 25<sup>th</sup> March we used the opportunity to give applicants and adoptive families the opportunity for a direct exchange. Representatives of the regulatory authority explained the comprehensive reorganisation of the central office in Berlin. All applicants were urged to consider children of a wider age range as there is an urgent requirement to find parents for children from four years upwards. Our applicants rose to this challenge during the course of the year and, in cooperation with us and the responsible youth welfare office broadened the age range.

Though it took another leadership change communication has been noticeably improved, it is now flexible and fast. We have taken on board the demands for files to be revised.

### **Chile.**

The number of children adopted from Chile is significantly lower than our original expectations. In particular, the time that these children spend in state care before being offered for adoption is baffling.

The relatively steady flow of aid that the Chilean state give to the poor means that there is no urgent need for resolving the situation that these children find themselves in, nobody is starving.

Again and again we discover six to eight year old children for whom parents are being sought have already spent years in state care. Summer Nest was a good model for adoption in Chile as it exclusively concentrated on the adoption of older children. Regrettably however, this concept cannot be deployed according to a statement from the head of the adoption department of the child protection agency *Sename*, as long as custody lies in the hands of the family court and not with the child protection agency. The application to gain approval for limited entry for these children is the subject of court proceedings. After this finding the presentation of the concept in person by Suzana Katz-Heieck during her vacation in Chile was all for nothing.

*Sename* defies it so: following agreement concerning conflicts uncovered within child welfare the Justice Department, under which the authority lies, has decided to split the latter into two. In future one will be responsible for all child protection activities including adoption and the other will be responsible for youth crime, prosecution of young offenders and supervision of young offenders institutes. The motion lies before parliament and should be implemented by the new government, (there are elections in December)

### **Russian Federation.**

Once again we have noticed how happy we can be with the concentration of our activities in Latin America. From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2009 we were visited by a delegation of representatives from a Russian child aid organization seeking cooperation. It was apparent that conventional operation in Russia would achieve very few successful adoptions per year. We had considered working with the Parent – Child Bridge agency, the only agency accredited in Russia and with whom we have successfully cooperated in Chechnya. Discussions concluded that a joint venture would indeed reduce the high cost of a local representation office but that the number of placements would be far too low to cover the costs.

### **Family Meeting.**

Family weekends have become a firm part of our work. Nine took place this year which we organized as follows: in the north for post code locations 0, 1 and 2; in mid-Germany for post code location 3; in the west for post code locations 4 and 5; the large family meeting for location 6 in Mittelhessen and for 6,7 and 8 in Baden-Württemberg and Bayern. In addition we organized the Chechnya and Chile meetings. We try to allocate something specific to each of these events, a key note, current topic, we invite subject matter experts, people who speak of their adoption experiences, we organize child care programs and much more.

For many years the Vietnam meeting has been organized by Carola Ley. A committed adoptive mother, she organised a wonderful weekend for the parents of Vietnamese children with great enthusiasm and imagination.

This year the high point in this respect was without doubt the visit by Héctor Ramos, our Colombian taxi hero. He took part in the Mittelhessen family meeting and experienced AdA operations on this side of the planet. For the first time he crossed the frosted glass security door through which he has seen hundreds of families disappear on their way to the plane. Once in Germany Héctor experienced first hand the effects caused by the change of surroundings and jet lag. As soon as he landed he found excited families were waiting for him. He was speechless as children confidently encircled him looking for a shred of recognition. Children that, not so long ago, he had comforted and quietly encouraged in Spanish, until finally saying farewell to with a heavy heart. In Colombia every child had put their trust in Héctor and immediately felt at home in his presence. The children now seemed to sense that it is something good that binds them to this Colombian. He was delighted as children still familiar to him spoke to him in German. He witnessed the confidence of the German couples who he had met as they were learning their new role as parents and who had relied upon his confidence and composure. He met friendly family groups who confirmed what he had hoped for and what he had often said to children and their new parents as they departed Colombia; "Everything will be fine in Germany". He took so many photographs that his new camera gave up on the first day. Héctor travelled here and there on the railway and, without a mobile telephone or knowledge of German, managed to get himself stranded. As he was trying to

get his bearings at Frankfurt train station he was greeted by a lady with "Hola Héctor!" and she put him on the correct train. He still does not know who she was. From north to south he was warmly welcomed and shown the splendour of Germany. He finally departed "his" children's the new home after three weeks, exhausted.

Each of these meetings leaves us tired but convinced that this type of exchange is necessary for everybody concerned, for the adoptive children, for their parents, for those waiting and for us ourselves. It is fundamentally important for us all to stay in contact. We hope to preserve this openness and thank each and every one of you for your trust that, as you know, gives us the strength to take up new activities and challenges in the area of adoption.

### **Youth Workshop.**

Through our adoption applicant and family meetings, our association's work and ongoing mentoring we witness how applicants become families and watch their children grow. Inevitably at some point the children no longer want to attend the AdA meetings. Understandably there comes a point where identification as a child of AdA parents is no longer sufficient and the motivation to attend such meetings declines.

This year we managed to bring together seven teenagers and young adults, this time without parents. It was an interesting, funny, happy but also work intensive weekend. Together we cooked Colombian dishes and viewed wonderful pictures of Colombia taken by one of the participants who has travelled in Colombia with her parents as part of an AdA trip. We really want to repeat this workshop next year and plan to include more information on the country of origin, culture and geography, cuisine and music, and of course information about AdA and our role as an adoption agency. In particular, we want the participants to be able to speak candidly about specific subjects and develop a sense of belonging by learning about the culture of their land of origin and their own lives. We are convinced that this meeting of teenagers and young adults should be part of our core guidance work. Please encourage your son or daughter to take part in this meeting once they reach 15 or older.

### **Public Relations.**

Our presence in the media, conferences, in working groups both at home and abroad is not a display of pride, it is a calculated strategy. We wish to bring the subject of adoption into open discussion and generate increased social awareness.

### **Panel Discussion at the Launch of Marion Gaedickes Book "Wunschkind"**

In this book Marion Gaedickes writes about the adoption of her children from Russia before Germany had ratified the Hague Convention on International Adoption. The book describes the swing between hope and despair at the mercy of the arbitrary practices of the Russian institutional apparatus. Invited to the panel discussion in Berlin was the representative of the Berlin Central Adoption office, Frank Licht, the new ministry for justice minister Sabine Leutheusser-Scharrenberger and Monika Müllers-Stein. The moderator was Maybrit Illner. We used the opportunity to present the work of an international adoption agency even when the focus of the discussion was on another subject. We hoped that we could use our contact with the minister to promote our cause, namely the long term safeguarding of our specialist work, and we gained some ground concerning this matter.

### **EurAdopt.**

This group of adoption agencies is recognised throughout Europe and has been in existence since 1993. They have championed the dignity of the child in international adoption through exchanges, cooperation, establishment of ethical principles, and the promotion of the implementation of the Hague Convention on International Adoption. We are pleased to announce that AdA joined EurAdopt in April 2009. Thereby we have gained a seal of quality recognised at international level which is not just an endorsement of our work but which enables us to compare and improve our processes, and in the best case scenario even improve mediation activities in general.

### **La Milagrosa School – Popayán.**

It has been mentioned elsewhere that ever more trainees are taking up the opportunity to work in our Colombian office for a couple of weeks as part of their internship. One of our trainees, Veronica Fußeder, stayed for half a year and worked, with guidance from the school psychologist and from specialists in our Munich office, in the *La Milagrosa* school in Popayán. She intensified the German language lessons and inspired even the youngest

school children to take the subject. She is applying the concentration and confidence which she gained in a research project which had been arranged between us and her university to survey the families sending their daughters to *La Milagrosa*. In interviews with 30 families she gathered data on family structure, for instance number of children living at home, parents occupation, parents education. Data on poverty was also gathered and statistically plotted by asking about number of rooms at the parents house, socioeconomic status, etc..

An interesting discovery was the motivation of the parents to send their children to *La Milagrosa* for schooling. Besides the very good reputation that the school has and the trust in the teaching ability of the Sisters they singled out the daily school meals which are provided by the Rotary Club Bad Vilbel. Even the local television station became aware of the unique project and made a documentary about Veronika's German lessons and the enthralled school girls.

### **Santa Luisa School – Cali.**

Construction of the school is currently progressing very slowly. Despite donations from KoKi, private initiatives and from AdA adding up to a considerable sum further progress depends on the approval of architectural plans which apparently need to be corrected. The Sister responsible, Maria Eugenia, who we know from the foundation of the *La Milagrosa* school, is involved and is committed as ever. The school in its current form is too small, in parts dangerously dilapidated and impossible provide security for. This is especially important in this particular district of Cali. The pupils need more than a place of learning and education, they also need protection from the dangers of this district which is plagued by gang wars and violence. Many of you are familiar with the district of *Agua Blanca* and the work of Padre Alfredo from television reports or from the film *Dr. Alemán*. That will give you an idea where the Sisters of the Order of Vincentian Fathers are working. AdA have been working with this order and their wonderful Sisters for 15 years. We are therefore very confident that the planned building works will soon proceed, particularly due to the strength of purpose, assertiveness, composure, kindness and the compassion and understanding for their pupils which is characteristic of these women.

### **Sponsorship.**

We oversee almost 200 sponsors, the majority jointly with the Oriéntame organisation. Adoptive families who have sponsor a child often use their stay in Colombia to visit their sponsor child. Normally the child is brought by its mother to the Oriéntame organization as we can be reasonably sure that the adoptive families can visit this district in safety. Julia and Jonas Stein (the son of Monika Müller-Stein) visited their sponsor child whilst on honeymoon and travelled to the *Ciudad Bolívar* district. Jonas, who lived and went to school in Bogotá for six years between 1992 and 1998, shares here the impression that *his* city made on him.

*It took eleven years until I found my way back to my second home in Colombia, this time accompanied by my wife Julia. After many wonderful experiences it was at last time to meet our sponsor child. Our friend Patricia Silva and social worker Luz Angelica from Oriéntame kindly accompanied us on our visit to Tanya and her family. After almost four years, during which time we have followed Tanya's progress from afar, it was possible to get to know her in person. The conditions on the ground are still difficult to judge using European standards and Tania's family of seven live in one room. However, if I compare this visit with my memories of this area then significant improvements become apparent, the streets are asphalted, the houses are restored and various schools have appeared. Thanks to the support from Oriéntame Tanya's undernourishment is visibly improved. Even if she is too small for her age at least Tanya's family receive professional help from Oriéntame in order to correct the condition. Unfortunately the visit with Tanya and her family is quickly over, but we left with the assurance that we would see her again. We came back from Colombia with the encouraging knowledge that that the country had clearly developed further. That the advancements made are not exclusively for the rich and the privileged, rather that it is also slowly improving the living conditions of the poorest people. And even if Colombian society still has a long, long way to go before poverty and injustice is dealt with, we have once again witnessed that even a low budget can bring improvements and that no form of aid is ever wasted.*

### **Food Parcels for Christmas.**

Once again we want to send every child and their family a food parcel for Christmas. For 30 Euro we can provide basic foodstuffs and a small surprise for both the children and their parents. In previous years we have been able to give all needy families in the partner program a little joy at Christmas. Take a look at our internet site *Aktuelles*. There you will find instructions on how to contribute to this years effort.

## **Involvement of Adoptive Families in their Children's Country of Origin.**

### **KoKi e.V.**

For ten years Maria Fuest was the chairwoman of KoKi e.V. ([www. KoKi.info](http://www.KoKi.info)), the organization for Colombian children in need. In this time she has shaped the organization with her kind but assertive, sensible and resolute ways. During her tenure of office KoKi has grown into a stable, functionally effective association which supports targeted projects for the welfare of children in need through regular donations. The treatment centre for children with cerebral palsy, *Hogar Fervor*, has been supported for many years and is a partner project for children with mental and / or physical disabilities in Cali. In addition the association provides help in Cali and in Circasia for individual cases where the child would certainly have to leave their family home for a state institution. Maria Fuest took each single project to her heart. Always at her side was Katerin Karg, who covered critical work in the area of accounting, internet presence and much more. We want to take the opportunity here to say a heartfelt thank you to both of you.

The election of Nicola Brunk and Heike Behrbohm to the board of management has given KoKi new drive and dynamics. As we have known both ladies for some time we are certain that KoKi is in the best hands. And the management have started with a very special project; this year will see the first advanced training in Bogotá of *Vojta*-therapy, which predominately helps spastic debilitated children. KoKi is sponsoring the training of a physiotherapist from *Hogar Fervor* so that "our" children will profit from this ground breaking therapy.

### **Chikitin e.V.**

Needy children in Chile are still dependant on aid and Chikitin e.V., ([www.chikitin.info](http://www.chikitin.info)), the association founded by the adoptive parents of Chilean children, has been supporting the orphanage La Aurora in southern Chile for some years. By a making a generous donation the members have financed a school extension which will be used as a computer room and funded the refurbishment of the complete school sanitary system. The children of La Aurora will be able to enjoy a wonderful Christmas this year thanks to the support of Chikitin e.V.,.

### **KiVie e.V.**

Our contact with Vietnam is assured by the work of Mrs. Hong, who is instrumental in the execution of social work. The KiVie e.V association ([www.kivie-eV.de](http://www.kivie-eV.de)) is financing this social work which primarily helps children who need medical treatment and young Vietnamese who aspire to some type of training. More details can be seen in the KiVie year end report.

## **Travel to the Land of Origin of Your Child / Your Future Child.**

María Fernanda Trujillo, one of our co-workers from the AdA office in Bogotá, this year accompanied the *Trip to the Cultural Roots*. She describes her experiences on our website under *Aktuelles*. We can only recommend participation on such a trip and, as we have seen in the past, it is especially well suited for adoption applicants who wish to feel better prepared. The stay can be extended beyond the duration of the organized trip. You will see regions of Colombia which you can never experience during your stay for adoption because then you will be far too busy in your new role as parents. It has also assisted one or two people to get through the waiting period. The group visited the ICBF in Bogotá, met our representative Patricia Silva and naturally Héctor, without whom adoption in Colombia, as you already know, is not possible.

## **In Our Own Case.**

15 years AdA Adoption Mediation and Advice.

10 years of AdA as a recognised Adoption Agency.

Our web site designer has donated a virtual laurel wreath and we also received several bouquets of flowers which was very pleasing. Our intention to stage a professional meeting in celebration proved to be a very time consuming undertaking. Even so we were very encouraged as we began to receive letters of acceptance from the speakers and the proceedings began to take shape. That we ultimately had to defer the event was because the July date which originally seemed to suit so well eventually clashed with other important events and we ran the risk of not having enough participants and insufficient funding. We really do have great respect for anyone who

successfully manages such a logistic nightmare. For now we have deferred our event, but postponed is not cancelled. Possible we will have to wait a full year before the event can be staged.

### **Personal Development.**

We are also noticing the general crisis affecting the business and employment markets. We take the decline in enquiries seriously and have reacted in terms of our personnel. Employees who leave are not being replaced and limited term contracts are not being renewed.

In Munich we have a fixed staff of two skilled personnel and one full time secretary. Frau Maras, who has been employed as a part time secretary, is leaving on 01.02.10. We were unable to offer her the full time position she requested and her fixed term contract could not be renewed. For the last few years we have regularly, in addition to our fixed personnel, engaged a student of social pedagogy to do their internship in with us in Munich. Some of these have completed a part of their internship in Colombia.

In Eschborn Mrs. Cerny has decided to take well earned retirement but will thankfully stay with us for one day per week. We welcome our new colleague Mrs. Merz-Jaske who will cover secretarial work on a part time basis. Mrs. Olesja Fischer has completed her probationary year in social pedagogy and will be taken on. Mrs. Oeming-Schill, an experienced social worker and adoption mediator, has been with us since the beginning of the year. We reported on this last year. Our music teacher, Inna Babich will complete her course of studies at the end of the year and will move to north Germany with her family. We would like to thank her as well as Mrs. Maras and Mrs. Cerny who have both worked hard for AdA over many years and we would like to send them all our very best wishes for the future.

For approximately one year Mrs. Eva Pietschmann has supported us on a voluntary basis in marketing. By profession a graduate veterinary surgeon, she has many years experience in marketing with an international pharmaceutical company. Her professional knowledge is invaluable for our internet site. She will take over the administration of the Oriéntame partnerships as she has already looked after the area as part of the organizational transformation. Mrs. Pietschmann will also advise us in relation to the foundation of an association for the long term development of aftercare.

In Bogotá Gabriela Vargas will look after the social projects in succession to Patricia Castrillón. Gabriela Vargas is a graduate biologist who completed part of her studies in Germany and speaks fluent German. She knows AdA very well having worked for AdA in Bogotá in 1997/98 before Patricia Silva took over the representation of AdA in Colombia.

### **Increase in the Requirement for Follow-up Mentoring and Aftercare.**

Over the course of the last 10 years as a recognised adoption agency we have seen the follow-up mentoring and aftercare become ever more important. In the early years we often had to cancel seminars because we could not find enough participants. This has been the first year where we have had to add seminars in order to meet demand. In addition to the seminars there is an increase in the number of couples requesting individual advice, which we have been able to provide in part.

Increasingly we are asked by adopted teenagers or young adults to organise seminars aimed at providing more information about themselves and their origins. They don't want to "bother" their parents. We are happy to take on this responsibility and are glad to take part in the further development of these young people. We are learning with every single case.

At the same time we have to consider carefully how we will finance this growing area of work.

### **Friends of AdA or Foundation of Former Associates.**

It is not clear to everybody that we are not a government authority but a non-profit association which came about by private initiative. Our responsibilities are similar to government authorities and there are bureaucratic constraints and requirements that we have to comply with, but we function like a private company and have monthly costs for rent, personnel, management, etc., which we have to generate. Our personnel have to remain committed without any of the safeguards that our colleagues in the authorities enjoy. Therefore we are thinking about creating a Friends Of AdA or a Foundation to safeguard the follow-up mentoring process and which is independent of our mediation activities. We cannot rely on state support as those with the political responsibility are not interested in the subject of international adoption. The numbers are too small to play a relevant political



role. In order to safeguard what we have achieved to date in quality mediation work we need new ideas. We need more *corporate identity*. A Foundation could ensure the future of this essential work. We will let these ideas mature over the winter and report in more detail on our website in the first half of the coming year.

This year we have mediated on behalf of 100 children. We are delighted for the children and their families for whom the year has come to such a wonderful end. The attached calendar will help us to increase the amount of donations for children in need. The calendars cost a minimum donation of 10 Euro. On our internet site you will find an order form with which you can order more copies of the calendar. Our colleagues in the public authorities are naturally exempt from the request for donations.

We wish you all a merry and reflective Christmas and a happy New Year.

AdA e.V.

Monika Müllers-Stein y Susana Katz-Heieck