

Suggestions to renew the system of godparents

by Irene Glück, managers without borders, March 25th 2013

O. Preliminary remark

The following suggestions base on the conversations and discussions I had with the trustees, the staff and the ambassadors Anna and Rudi. I thank all the people who shared their thoughts with me. I have included the experiences I brought along from my work in Germany.

When I am using the terms “the Trust” and “You” within this paper I want to address mainly the Trustees and the (temporary) Trust manager. Please excuse mistakes due to lack of vocabulary.

1. The task

The present system of godparents sponsorships has not been adapted over the years. As I have understood, it must now change to fit different circumstances at the GSĐT and in the community. The reasons are:

The present system

- Is not scalable
- Is not sensitive and fair and is not perceived to be so
- Establish relationships that are often based primarily on the transfer of money
- Does not reflect real levels of sponsorship at the GSĐT

I was asked to make suggestions how a new system of sponsorships could look like. The new system should require less elaborate administration and should be easier to handle. It should avoid a personalized sponsorship, but still allow for personal contacts between sponsors and beneficiaries. The new system must be scalable, must be perceived as fair and must allow for mentorship models as well as donations. It must, finally, still be able to address sponsors emotionally because donating money is often more a cause of the heart than of the head.

2. How could the new system look like?

2.1. Offer people to sponsor a “project”

A “project” could be:

- **The Trust Center** (“To use the money where it is most needed”)
- **The crèche** (Make examples what the money will be used for: “With... xx Rand you make it possible to take in a child whose parents can not pay the fees “ or “With xx Rand we can buy 10 new games for the crèche”,....)

- **School education** (Make examples like: „With xx Rand we can pay the school fee for one child whose parents are not able to pay themselves. „With xx Rand we can help a child to get a school uniform.“)
- **The Aftercare** (Make examples as mentioned above to explain what the money will be used for)

Sponsorship here signifies regular payment (monthly, quarterly, annually) of a certain amount of money which is used for the chosen “project”.

These three possibilities should be easy to handle by setting up a separate account, if you do not have done this already. Through the annual audits, done by an independent auditor it can be proved that the money is used for the chosen “project”.

If you want to make it more tangible, you could offer sponsorships for “smaller cases” like

- **An after-care-class** (Like mentioned above make examples: “For xx Rand 10 new games can be bought” or “ For xx Rand the class can go on an outing twice a year” or “For xx Rand we can buy new chairs and desks for the class”)
- **Activity clubs** (“For xx R we can offer a drama group for 6 month”)
- **A teacher** (“For xx Rand we can pay an teacher for one month” “For xxx Rand we can sent a teacher to a special training”, “For xx we can hire an extra teacher for one month”)
- **The meals** you offer in the trust. As far as I know the trust pays for it. Why not find sponsors who pay not only for the food but also for workshops on subjects like healthy food, good nutrition,... – You can find lots of ideas in your nutrition reports.

It is neither necessary nor possible that you buy exactly the things mentioned in the examples from the money a special sponsor donates. It is just for giving the sponsors an idea what the money will be used for. In fundraising terms you call this “shopping list”. As mentioned above you should set up a separate account for each of the offered cases, which might cause some more work for the administration.

Maybe you could choose 2 – 3 permanent „projects“ and offer them to permanent sponsor and also describe 2 – 3 other „projects“ to use for once only donations and non-permanent sponsors.

2.2. Define, what you offer to the sponsors

2.2.1. Visits

- The sponsors are welcome to visit the Trust and spend some time with the crèche or an aftercare class.
- A homevisit with one of the children and it's parents can be arranged. (To offer that you need to find a group of parents who are willing to open their houses for such visits.)
- A township-tour can be arranged.

Sponsors who like to visit should contact the Trust manager at least 1 week before, so that arrangements can be made.

2.2.2. Information

- A newsletter with information on the trust and on the “projects” twice a year per E-mail. A short annual financial report once a year could be part of one of the newsletters.
- A “Thank-you-letter” with brief information what has been done with the donations and maybe a request for extra support for a new project or a special need. This letter could be sent before Christmas. It could be sent by mail but it should be personally addressed. (This is a little more work, but I’m convinced it pays.)

Newsletters and Thank-you-letter should include pictures and personalized examples, e. g. one of the children gives a personal report. Newsletter and “Thank-you-letter” should be in German.

2.2.3. Publication

- on your homepage (Consider to offer your homepage in English and German, of course with the same content)
- in the local newspapers (This might especially of interest to local sponsors.)
- in your newsletters and annual reports

Excursus: If you want to encourage more personal contacts...

Pen friendships using e-mail or social media activities between sponsors and older children or sponsors and teachers could be encouraged. You have a facebook page already, which could be used. You could also consider to start a “mentoring program” connecting experienced people with older children or teachers.

But: Before starting such activities the advances and disadvantages should be carefully considered. The contacts should not be connected with donations, at least the trust should not be involved.

3. How to get there

3.1. Picture and Communicate your vision, mission and message

As far as I have understood, the philosophy and the vision of the trust developed over the years. It is no longer “support the poorest of the poor” but “give children of Kayamandi a chance to develop their potential.” This change which is also a change from supporting one child to providing the community with high quality education needs to be communicated. It is the background for the new system of sponsorships.

- Why did you change philosophy and vision of the Trust?
- What is your new vision?
- What is the mission?
- What is the message to the people you want to win as sponsors, donors, friends?

Communication is the key to win the ambassadors, the godparents and future sponsors to share your new vision. Only if they share this new vision, if they believe the new system of

sponsorship is the right thing to do now, they will be able to find new sponsors and friends for the Trust.

(Are you sure, everybody of the staff shares the changed vision and mission of the Trust? If not, it might be wise to step back and work on these issues together with the staff members.)

3.2. Change the system step by step

3.2.1. Do not start new godparentships anymore

3.2.2. Offer godparents to stay with the old system or to move to the new system

Currently there are 136 Godparentships. About 10 or 11 godparents visit their godchildren regularly. About 15 godparents regularly sent letters or gifts to their godchild. (There might be some who contact their godchildren directly without informing the trust, but probably not many.) These two groups of Godparents (ca. 25 persons/couples) probably have a strong personal relationship to their godchildren.

Let these godparentships go on until to their “natural end” e. g. child moves, child leaves school, child finishes school, godparent wants to stop.

The remaining rest which is the biggest group (110 persons or couples) could be asked, if they are willing to change to one of the new established forms of sponsorship. If they agree, they move, if they don't agree they are treated like the first two groups.

It might happen, that some of the godparents will decide to stop their donations for the Trust and look for another project which offers godparentships for children. This should be accepted.

3.2.3. Offer new sponsors to sponsor a “project” like described in 2.1.

3.2.4. Use new regulations on visits and information for all sponsorships

Inform the godparents who decided to stay with the old system how you plan to manage visits and information (2.2.) and try to get their approval. As there might be strong personal relationships between ambassadors and certain godparents who are friends of the ambassadors it is wise to talk to the ambassadors first.

3.3. Find new sponsors

If you plan to find a lot more new sponsors I suggest you to work out a project plan which includes

- Description of the “projects”
- Target groups
- Your Message
- Benefit of the sponsors
- Communication medias (Webside, Flyers, Events, Mailings....)

3.4. Describe the role of the ambassadors in the new system

As you have published on your (new) homepage the people called ambassadors made the founding of the Trust possible and financed the purchase of the Ikhaya Trust Centre. They have raised funds in Europe, found new godparents, donors and friends for the Trust and have donated annually for the education project and the

Trust Centre. So far they have felt the responsibility “to look after the wise use of the donations” of the godparents and donors they won.

With the new philosophy and the new system the role of the ambassadors will change. They are no longer asked to find new godparents. They can hardly take responsibility for the wise use of the donations. Still, they can do a lot: They can help to find new sponsors, donors and friends for the Trust. They may organize events to collect money for the trust. They can find a school or a company in Germany which wants to support the trust with money or volunteer work. There are a lot of ideas if you ask creative people

As everyone of us knows new ideas do not always end up as sustainable projects but may cause frustrations. Sometimes a good idea just does not fit to the organization, or it is not the right time or people may not understand the benefit they get,....

Therefore I recommend you to define the role of the ambassadors and describe, how ambassadors, trustees and staff will work together in future. (The “you” here includes the ambassadors, for I think you should do this together or at least come to an agreement on this.)

It might happen, some of the ambassadors cannot share the changed philosophy and vision which is the basis of the new system. Maybe they will decide to leave the Trust and look for a project which is closer to the original idea of helping the poor.

4. How could the new system be administrated?

4.1. Go on working together with a german partner

In Germany donations are tax deductible if you have a Charitable Donation Certificate. (Spendenbescheinigung). Therefore is important that sponsors and donors can get such a certificate.

Only a organization which has been acknowledged as a non-profit-organisation by the german tax authorities is allowed to issue a Charitable Donation Certificate. A german partner is needed. Therefore I suggest:

1. Find out, if your present partner the registered association (Verein) “Wir helfen Kindern in der dritten Welt e. V.”, <http://haende-mit-herz.de/projekte/greater-stellenbosch-development-trust> is willing and/or able to go on collecting the donations and issuing the donation certificates for you. If yes, find an agreement how you will work together in future. (By the way. The information on the Trust and its projects refers very much to the old system. It should be updated.)
2. If you cannot or do not want to go on with “Wir helfen Kindern in der dritten Welt” e. V. you could look for another partner organization. If it comes to this, Helene from “Managers without borders” is willing to help.

3. You could also look for a group of (min. 7) german friends of the trust who are willing to found a new registered association (Verein).

If the financial transactions (money transfers) could go directly from the donor/godparent to the trust by using the "Given gain" facility maybe only the issue of the "Spendenbescheinigung" needs to be done by your German partner

4.2. Define who is in charge for the following jobs which should be done by the Trust

- Manage contracts with the sponsors (create new forms, send them to the sponsors or put them on the Homepage that sponsors can download, sent a confirmation with a "Thank-you" to every new sponsor right away).
- Plan and realize two newsletters per year: Collect information, pictures, stories, write the newsletter and sent it to the remaining godparents and the new sponsors. Also put it on the Homepage
- Create and sent a Thank-you-letter once a year to all Sponsors and remaining Godparents, to the ambassadors and to the german organization which collects the donations and issues the Charitable donation certificates for the German sponsors.
- Manage visits and gifts of Godparents and sponsors
- update the list of sponsors (and godparents) regularly
- Do the book-keeping like described above (2.1.)
- Write a short financial report which can be included to one of the newsletters.

Newsletters and Thank-you letters should be available in German. The translation could be made by the german speaking Trustees, volunteers or friends of the trust or by the German partner organization or if it is possible further on by Christel Frei or one of the other german ambassadors.

As long as you establish the new system and for the time you will run both systems, there might be some more work to be done. But I am sure: The more you get the new system working, the better the benefit will be. Good luck!