

Outreach of the Rehab Team in Kebebe Tsehay, 29.7.2022

On Friday, July 29, 2022, the entire rehab team and a colleague from the wheelchair workshop went on an extraordinary mission to a large orphanage in Addis Ababa. We were asked to look at some children with severe multiple disabilities and assess how best to help them. From the initial information, the children spend most of their lives in bed. We were warmly welcomed, and after unpacking our equipment and making the room where the examinations were to take place a little more comfortable and child-friendly, the first little patients arrived.

Our three physiotherapists and our wheelchair technician immediately set to work, not without shedding a few tears at first, because the children were indeed very severely disabled and unfortunately there was little knowledge in their environment on how to properly deal with them. Many of them showed signs of neglect. The caregivers on site do their best, but they are usually understaffed and have no nursing, medical or therapeutic training. This seems to us to be the only explanation for how it is possible not to notice that three of the young patients had a dislocated hip. There is a great lack of knowledge about how to position children properly, how to mobilize them, stimulate them, carry them, and how to give them emotional attention.



We were particularly touched by the saddest little girl we ever encountered in our work. About three years old, little Hewan (name changed) shares the fate of so many children in this country. She was dropped off at the orphanage about a year ago. Her parents could not/would not keep her. It breaks your heart to see how she closes herself off, not smiling even once, rejecting everything and everyone around her with much defiance and anger.... Her loneliness represents the thirteen children we saw that morning, orphans who are not orphans at all, but children abandoned because, on the one hand, the families are too poor to take care of them and/or cannot bear the social stigma. This is an experience that we unfortunately make far too often in our work.

Despite the sad circumstances we could also experience little precious moments of joy and the shining in the eyes of the children as soon as we talked and played with them.

We hope that the new management of the home will help to improve the care situation and that the staff will be trained and accompanied in the future. Addis Guzo is willing to participate in this with further training courses.

