

## REPORT

Trip to the Arca Village ( Talgar – Kazakhstan ) from 16 to 21 February 2007

Participants: Roberto Depretis, Carlo Paglia, Franco Paglia

Reason for the trip: update on the situation and projects for the future

Milan 5 March 2007.

The situation in general terms seems to be positive, also if there are still a few disagreements with the local Authorities concerning the “affido” of the children.

At present all children are back to the Village with the exception of Anvar, sent to a special school, Karina and Sabina (sisters) on which the Authorities have to check the documentation and decide, plus Cristina and her two brothers. One of the two brothers’ documents are not perfectly regular, so that all three have to stay in the State orphanage to protect the “family unit”.

As far as Vova and Natasha, the two adults living in the Village with grave disabilities are concerned, the Authorities have accepted their staying at the Village at least until end 2007.

We hope that such permission be renewed on a regular basis.

Unfortunately, Guido was not able to obtain permanent visas for the other children, too.

We are convinced that these visas will never arrive, and that each time we will need to obtain a temporary visa. At present these visas need to be renewed every 3/4 months.

Despite the uncertainty of the situation, recently the Municipal Police has been bringing more abandoned children to the village. These children have been rescued from desperate conditions, and according to the Talgar authorities, they can remain in Arca without many formal procedures. This will be the situation until new structures are put in place.

Currently 60 children are being hosted.

The last meeting between Guido and Talgar’s Municipal Administration established that there are at least 70/80 children living locally in harsh family conditions, and some of these are disabled.

The authorities also admitted that they do not know how to deal with the situation and they would like to give to the Village permission to help these children in need.

As such we will need to prepare for this situation by planning and raising the funds necessary to build a new home. During this visit, we decided to renovate the house next to the canteen, located opposite the office/store. At the moment only the foundations exist.

## MEDICAL CENTRE

The medical centre started to work with the local people and soon it will be able to receive and help people from outside the village. The centre is fully operational now that the repair works to the heating plant are finished.

During the last few months, thanks to the presence of Father Luca, the rehabilitation gym has been used and the exercises coordinated by P Luca have given splendid results. A youth (whose name now escapes me) after a few months of exercises was able to get up from his wheelchair and walk (with difficulty, but he used all his willpower and strength).

Irina and the others have used P Luca's great passion and drive, and without any specific knowledge, gave them exercises on a daily basis which enabled them to make progress.

## SCHOOL

The children regularly attend the courses organised by Arca's teachers, and very often also the smaller ones (from 3 to 5 years) want to attend and learn to read and write. It is very emotional and moving to see the passion with which the little ones go to school neatly in line.

## WATER SITUATION

This is to date a sore subject.

The lack of water in the village is shocking; even in the winter time very little arrives.

During the last few months they found out that many times a day there is no water available at all, the reason is that the water is used by a car wash garage located in the area. Throughout the day, Dima (a boy that lives and works in the village) goes to the mains located at approx 500/600 meters from the village to open the water!

In the spring the construction of a well should begin again. The well will make the village completely autonomous as regards to water supply.

## VISIT AND LUNCH

On Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> of February, Mr Ruslan, an ex-procurator that now runs an architect studio in Talgar, offered and organised a lunch at the village. This lunch was offered, as per the Muslim religion, to remember and honor the recent death of his parents. The lunch was also attended by Almathy's Mufti.

The atmosphere was very polite and friendly and a very moved Mr Ruslan, promised to continue to support the village with donations and by telling as many people as possible about the village.

The Mufti, after having blessed the food as customary in the Muslim religion (sunnī) also invited Guido to bless it following the Catholic tradition.

This was a very significant gesture, considering what is going on in the world at present.

The lunch was a wonderful occasion for all the children: grown-ups and little ones, Italian and Kazaki, all in the same table eating!

I would like to point out (and I am not the only one!) that eating a sheep cooked following the muslim tradition was not actually a delicacy!

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Sebastiano's closing note:

- it is satisfactory noting that, after so many crisis, things are now running in a more “normal” way;
- we have to wait for finalization of plans concerning the new well and the new building, in order to decide how we can help;
- for sure, on our side, we have to re-launch the Long Distance Adoption programme for 2007, bearing in mind that these funds are required for the day-to-day life of the children.

7 March 2007