



Always locked up as a child – now has a good job

The first person I meet after landing in Portugal and arriving in Carcavelos the first morning, is a happy young man of 25, who comes half running to me, holds out his arms and says:- Madam, madam.



I recognize him and his whole history springs to my mind. His family lived in an almost empty shed just beside the nasty-smelling stream, right across the street from where we lived. He was one of the five children who were always looked-up! The mother went to work and locked in the children, who had to stay in the house but could go up to the roof.

One day the mum had came to me, with her her youngest child wrapped up in one of the crocheted blankets I had given her, and said, desperate: -What shall I do? She is dead? What could I answer? The baby was already dead!

The boy remembered all the bags I had brought them, with food and with clothes. And the summer camps! Now he is employed in this excellent shopping centre, with the shoemaker, and he beams from pride to be able to appear before Madam, in this environment.



While we are talking, one of his sisters passes by with her daughter in the arms. She also beams with pleasure when she sees me. The whole family, parents and all her siblings have been able to leave the slums for a social area. They live together in one little apartment, where also the siblings who have married, stay. This is why I work with what I do. To see people come out of bad circumstances and create a life worth living.

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A Hope in the Dark

A Newsletter From Maj-Lis Humanitarian Foundation in Portugal

September - November 2007



Portugal is one of the poorest countries of the EU



Dear friends,

August 2007

The Foundation wants to thank you for helping us send many children this summer that have been able to exchange misery and poverty for a wonderful time in a camp. At the same time we never neglect our other long-term commitments.



We do hope that more want to be a part of the Foundation and contribute on a preferably regular basis for a long time to come!

For many children in Portugal the outsidership is a part of their everyday life and the step into drug dealing is very short. Poverty and limited possibilities in life force many to drop school and work for the sustention of the family instead. Drug traffic can then become the least bad alternative, "just like any job," say some of those who push drugs and keep watch.

Adults often beat their children, because that "is what you do" and it is accepted in the society. In the summer camps, children instead learn to show each other respect. Children watch and think and get help to understand why they are punished and beaten at home. Sometimes it is because the mummy drinks and just can't go on any longer. Sometimes it is our own fault. We should be quick with our apologies, even if it is the other's fault, because God forgives us, when we forgive the one who do wrong to us. With such an interior dynamics, we get a new courage to live. To know that you are poor, but just us valuable as a rich person, in the eyes of God, is also a richness.

John 3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.



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Portugal is one of the poorest countries of the EU

In Portugal there are
200 000 hungry people
2 million poor
20% in the risk zone
of becoming poor.
(Source: Euro stat EU)

Portugal is, starting this summer, again in the limelight as the leader of the European Union for the third time. Already on July 1st, when Portugal is proclaimed as the country of presidency after Germany, we learned that Portugal is one of the poorest countries of the Union. Thousands receive food packages from the 13 food banks in Portugal.



People I meet in Sweden say that they thought poverty was gone, but they were astonished when they heard the news about Portugal.

The permanent president of the EU Commission, Barroso, is Portuguese. And José Socrates holds the chairman's gavel. Thus, the now 50 years old Union is led by two Portuguese men – towards Africa and streams of refugees and towards South America and financial agreements. Portugal and Brazil have the same language through the colonial heritage and the presidency started with an EU-Brazil summit.

Portugal "owned" colonies all over the world, which were set free 33 years ago. The result we have seen around us. Approximately each tenth citizen is today of African origin and has great difficulties in today's Europe. It is especially among these people that the Foundation has been giving help and support.

Daily we hear saying that there is no job to be had, companies move to China, and highly educated people from the East who want to come to Europe, easily end up in Portugal where they get a job before the ex-colonials.

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