

« One must heart children »

Hansjörg Huber wants to give “discarded” children in Morocco a dignified life.

The former insurance expert Hansjörg Huber made a bold decision: He is investing half of his assets in a very special kind children’s home.

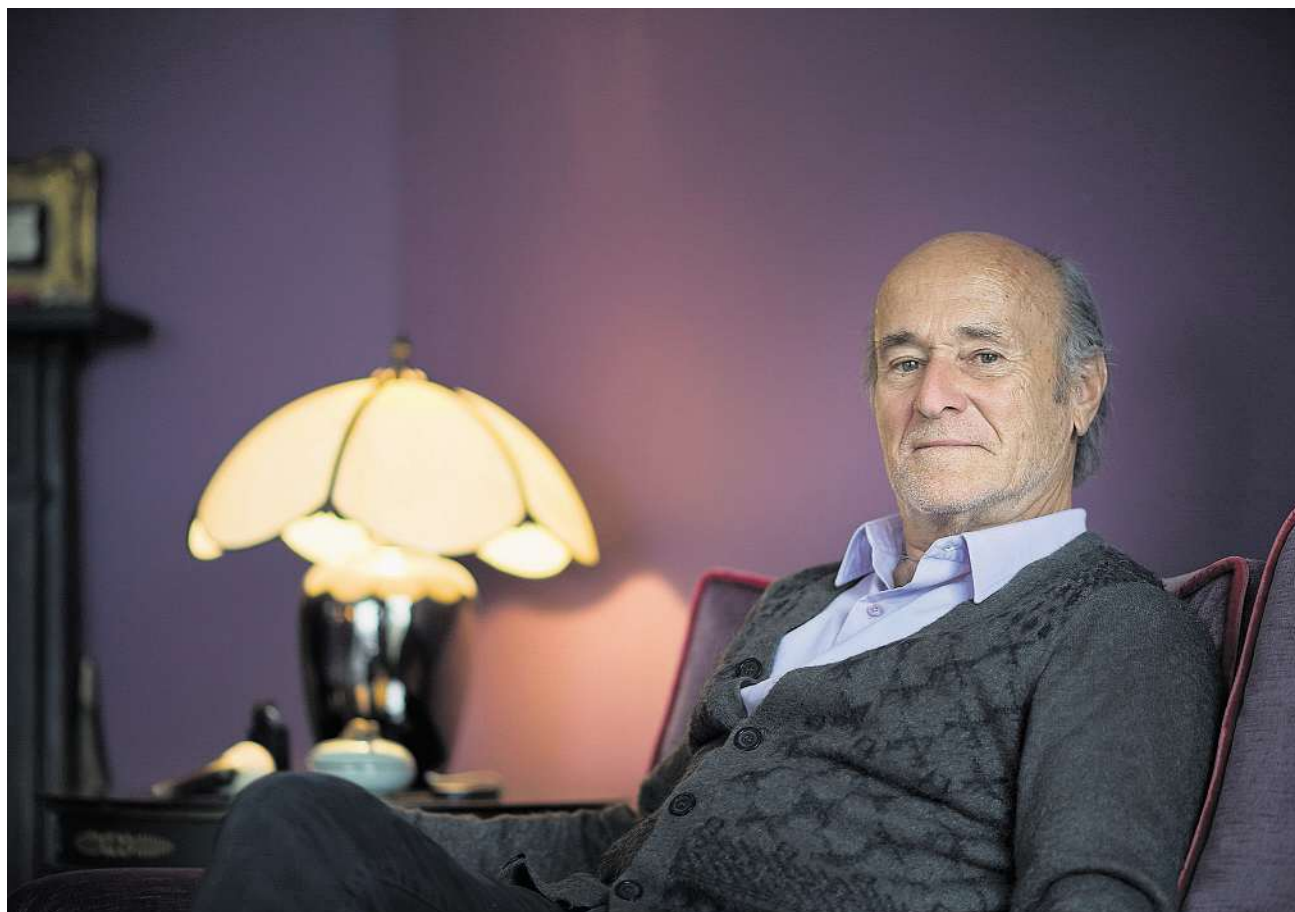
Angela Schader

Hansjörg Huber very well knows that the verb “hearting” cannot be found in a dictionary. But could he have shaped a better term for his intention? Ever since visiting the Pestalozzi-Dorf in Trogen, Switzerland, a children’s home, when 22 years old, he has not forgotten the children’s destiny, he recaps in his generously furnished home in Zurich. And now he wants to give back after having been fortunate to have had family happiness and professional success.

Love, Pride and Self-esteem

Originally he had planned an orphanage or refugee home. But soon he became aware of the children who had been “discarded” by unmarried mothers and their destiny. Around 20 illegitimate children are abandoned per day and carry a particularly hard fate in a conservative Muslim society in which they are strongly stigmatized. “The actual Islam is as tolerant as our Christian religion and emphasizes the duty to help the poor and homeless. But from a Barbu – a fundamentalist that uses religion as a vehicle to enforce their one power – I was told that I was trying to help children that are the result of a criminal act. What can one answer to that?”

Huber’s interest was now focused on these children who bear a double discrimination by having been abandoned and at the same time being socially disrespected. Here is where the “hearting” come into place in a double sense: In addition to missing care and love he also wants to provide these children with pride and self-esteem in their interaction with society. “Dar Boudidar” is the future name of the children’s home close to Marrakech that Huber has been planning since 2009. The complex is being built in the local style and consists of basic living houses, a schoolhouse, a mosque



A big heart, imagination and a lot of confidence - Hansjörg Huber, the initiator of the Children’s Village «Dar Boudidar.»

with a large community room, a medical station, a sports area and farm house. The farm house simultaneously will serve for self-supply and also offer the children a learning and skills area.

One main goal from day one was to integrate the project into the local context. “In Morocco we are foreigners and often viewed as faithless”, says Huber, ignorance nourishes fear intolerance. It is my job to reduce this. Even a politician has asked what my motivation for this project is. I need to make clear that I have no expectation of returns - specifically that we are not aiming to evangelize the children.” Huber has presented his project to the Swiss ambassador and the Swiss-Moroccan Chamber of Commerce in order to win them as stakeholders and supporters. Most of all he continuously involves locals in the direct environment of the children’s home in various matters. Thereby hiring the 100 construction workers under who’s hands the village is

arising within the direct region in which the unemployment rate is over 50%. Also the 12 “Mothers” that will care for groups of eight to ten children are to be recruited from groups of local Berbers. This special task has been delegated to a three person board of Moroccan experts – in which very luckily one woman is a member that herself has experience the fate of being a abandoned child. She also will later function as the children’s home manager.

Everyone is a winner

Is it not a risk to create a gap between those of the community that are involved and those not? “Yes that is a risk.” Huber confirms. That is why he has ensured that the projects creates local jobs and thereby the community can profit from the home presence. “In addition to the “Mothers” we are hiring a Moroccan doctor that will live in the village and be accessible to the local community. Since the expenses are only a fraction of what we would have

in Switzerland this is well manageable. We have also acquired three ambulances from the German army that will be painted in cheerful colors that will be used by a pediatrician and nurses as mobile clinics to travel to local villages even in the most remote areas. Brida van Castelberg, the former head physician of the Triemli Hospital in Zurich, will sponsor the expenses for a Moroccan gynecologist and midwife, who will also travel with a mobile clinic. In addition children from local villages will have access to the sport area and farm, come to local day care and even learn English.”

Language education is a further chapter that Huber wants to pass on to the children. Aside from the mother tongue - Tamazight or another local Berber dialect – an early casual contact with English and French are planned when they reach school age. This will enable a better integration once they join to village school and the children have gained self-esteem that will help them deal

with any kind of mortifications due to their origin.

Every single franc goes to the project

Hansjörg Huber financed the building land and the construction of the village with his own assets – except for the mosque which he wisely managed to finance from local donations. “I am not a rich man but decided that half of what I could invest would be sufficient.” That everyone should think and act so great heartedly remains wishful thinking but also smaller contributions will add to the project. The non-profit organization “Verein zur Unterstützung les enfants Dar Boudidar“ was founded in April 2012 and now has spin-offs in Germany and Austria with over 600 memberships. This donor group shall continue to grow and keep the village running with annual fees, sponsorships and larger donations. Thereby Huber hopes to take next steps toward additional villages.

“Our greatest plus is that every franc is put into the project” says Huber. “Reputable attorneys and PricewaterHouseCoopers control the finances free of charge and underline the respectability of the organization. Administration and advertising expenses are sponsored by myself within a small budget: we have many voluntary helpers and also spread the word of the project”. Furthermore many Swiss donors and students with a social or agronomical background shall have a chance for hand-on contributions by caring for the children and teaching them new crafts and skills – and thereby learning for life. Maybe exactly the lesson Hansjörg Huber learned when once visiting the children’s home as a 22 year old.

for more information :
www.kinderdorf-marrakech.ch
or www.lesenfantsdarboudidar.org

*English translation by office
«Dar Boudidar»*