

Trip to Pakistan October 21 - November 5, 2022

Report by Ellena Klennert, the daughter of Dr. Klaus Klennert, who accompanied the trip

Karachi, 22.10 – 25.10.22

22.10.22: Annual Meeting ICC Germany-Pakistan and more

We arrive in Karachi at four o'clock in the morning - Klaus and Ellena Klennert and Julian Völker, Ellena's cousin. A small reception committee is already waiting for us there: our host Mrs. Durdaana Arshad, Deputy District Governor of District 3271 and both the President and another member of her Rotary Club.

Durdaana lives in Karachi's Naval district, as her husband was an admiral. Fortunately, we are allowed to relax in her spacious house for a few hours before the real reason for the trip, the Annual Meeting of the Inter Country Committee (ICC) Germany-Pakistan. Edgar and Dagmar Cramm as well as Volker Flasse are on site in Karachi, along with Faiz Kidwai, Shahab Raza Khateeb and others from the Pakistani side. This year's event in Pakistan is a major attraction - even the Incoming World President, Gordon McNally, attends the ICC meeting! Several Rotaractors under the leadership of Dilawar Abro ensure that the technical aspects of the hybrid meeting run smoothly so that everyone in front of the screens, whether in Islamabad or Germany, can be present. This includes Kamal and Nighat Aziz from Pakistan and Alois Kühn and others from Germany.

Durdaana and I take our leave during the meeting to go to another Rotary Club's "Breast Cancer Awareness Talk" - (almost) only for women. It's great to see that this topic is no longer taboo in Pakistan, but that numerous initiatives are working to raise awareness about breast cancer - posters for "Breast Cancer Awareness Month" have been put up all over the city. The women are very welcoming, even if none of them can quite place me at first - am I the daughter of the world president? (Heather McNally is the guest of honor at the event) In every conversation, I realize how important it is to present yourself well - at least everyone is good at it! Unfortunately, the large hall doesn't really fill up, even though we wait longer and lots and lots of photos are taken. The presentations by two experts - in English - are very good. However, I was a little surprised - at least the wife of the incoming district governor who accompanied us didn't speak any English.

The presentations are framed very formally - first the national anthem (on YouTube), numerous words of welcome and then words of thanks at the end. Then there is high tea - all vegetarian, warm and very tasty. I really like the warmth and openness of the Pakistani women, the atmosphere is really nice. The president of the organizing club, RC Karachi Roshni, turns out to be Anita Kirmani, who has already been a guest of my parents in Polling. She is delighted to meet us and we make plan to meet up in the next few days.

We quickly take a detour to the upper floor of the hotel, where some of the same women and others greet me and I receive a gift basket - but mainly photos are taken.



With lots of business cards in our pockets, we hurry home and then head straight to the next event, a dinner in honor of the world president. A beautiful garden awaits us - and it is wonderful to sit outside in the balmy evening air after a day in air-conditioned halls. Unfortunately, we don't get to hear much more of the Rotaract Club's presentation on its relief efforts in flooded areas; we can simply enjoy the buffet and the garden.

Sunday, 23.10.22 - Visit Rotary village Jo Goth with RC Makli

The next morning we set off early - to Jo Goth, "Our Village", which was rebuilt with the help of German funds for displaced people after the flood disaster in 2010. Fortunately, with foresight, it was built on higher ground so that no damage occurred this time.

The day is organized by the Rotary Club of Makli, a town about an hour from Karachi. We arrive there in a minibus, accompanied not only by Durdaana and one of her club friends, but also by a photographer and a guard. Halfway to Makli, we are joined by a police jeep - they take more than good care of our safety. On the way, we occasionally see camps of people who were displaced by the floods a few weeks ago.

In Makli, we are welcomed with cake and tea and find it somewhat difficult to distinguish between the many Rotarians who have come to honor us - some have come from Makli, others even from Mohenjo Daro to accompany us. In contrast to the club members in the city, we only meet men here, and we don't get to know the women of the house either, although we do get to meet their father-in-law and brother. Only the daughter of a Rotarian, 14 years old, joins us - she speaks fluent English and is very courageous, it is fun to talk to her.



We are all presented with scarves and photos in every possible constellation are taken.



On the way to Jo Goth, we are joined by other Rotarians, making a total of around 25 people.

In Jo Goth, we are welcomed - at least it feels like it - by the entire village.



Charpois and soft cushions are spread out under a canopy - we are asked to sit down. It seems too strange to sit there in the middle of everyone and leave the others standing so that everyone ends up standing. Women and girls tend to stay in the background. I try to make contact with them, but they are very shy and I also need a translator. Even women with small children look very old and

exhausted, it's painful to see (unless they are grandmothers, which I don't know, of course).



The houses seem to be in good condition, but there is a lot of garbage lying around in the village and we suspect that there is no way to dispose of it properly - in any case, there is no garbage collection. It is dusty and very hot. We visit the school, but it's Sunday so we don't see any activity. Several rooms are currently being rebuilt with the support of Rotary Germany.



House shared by two families



**Outdoor kitchen and toilet
belong to every house**



The school



New classrooms, still unfinished

The visit to Jo Goth actually only takes up a very small part of the day, although we would have liked to spend a little more time there. We also visit the Makli Necropolis, which has been quite well

restored in recent years with the support of UNESCO, have a good meal in a restaurant by a large lake and visit both a local Hindu temple and the beautiful mosque of Thatta. An incredible number of group photos are taken. I wonder what will happen to all of them?

Mosque in Thatta



Hindu temple in Thatta

We return late, so we gladly accept Durdaana's suggestion of a small dinner at home. Small is the wrong word, as her staff conjure up several delicious dishes for us in no time at all and we spend a very pleasant evening with Durdaana, who told us a lot about her life and her Rotary activities - a very committed, open and warm-hearted woman!



We are also well looked after the next day - two Rotaract representatives show Julian and me the fantastic Defence Society Mosque and Jinnah's tomb. Among other things, they tell us about the district's mobile library project, in which Rotaractors bring books to schools and motivate pupils and teachers to read them.



Defence Society Moschee

In the evening, the big World Polio Day dinner is on the agenda. We are supposed to be there at 18:30 - but it's still empty. The speeches, tributes and photo sessions finally begin at 8pm. Many people are on their cell phones at the same time and talking quietly - at first I'm surprised, but as it goes on until 11 pm, it's no wonder in the end. I'm lucky, a young Rotaractor sits down with me and explains a lot, tells me about medical camps that the Rotaract clubs are holding at weekends in areas affected by the floods, about the numerous Rotaract clubs in Karachi and the opportunities they offer their members, and finally introduces me to her fiancé, whom she met while working at Rotaract district level. At 11 pm, the buffet is finally opened and the informal, cordial and exciting part begins - but unfortunately it is far too short!

The Rotaractors give us beautiful scarves and lots of goodbyes before we rush off to bed again.

For the next morning, we were able to spontaneously squeeze in a visit to a school in a poorer district of Karachi, which is supported by RC Karachi-Roshni. Boys and girls are taught together here, with the school giving preference to girls in particular. Several teachers are themselves graduates of the school, and computer courses are held in the evenings. The pupils learn Taekwando, there are excursions every now and then, and there is internal training for the teachers on Saturdays - we are really impressed.



Children who had to flee due to the floods are being taught in the library



Lahore, 25.10- 29.10.22

In Lahore, we were also able to stay with a Rotarian, Max Babri and his Swedish wife Maybritt. On two evenings, we also have the opportunity to exchange ideas with other Rotarians. The exchange with Max also enables us to learn a lot about Pakistan and makes travel planning much easier 😊





Klaus' old student friend Md. Hussain Bhatti, with whom he did research in Pakistani villages for his dissertation in 1979, organizes a great programme for us in Lahore, where we get to know this beautiful city from its best side - the old town, the fort and even a trip to the Wagah border, where every evening at sunset there is a spectacle of the taking down of the flags, where India and Pakistan show their strength in a kind of war dance in front of thousands of spectators - but somehow also cooperate.

Unfortunately, we are unable to see the Kick For Tolerance project in action as planned - on the very day it is scheduled to take place, Imran Khan, the former Prime Minister, calls on his supporters to gather in Sialkot. He is not to be allowed to hold political office for the next five years due to alleged corruption charges - so he calls on his large following to take part in a long march to Islamabad, starting in Sialkot and elsewhere. The plans for the march change almost daily, so that we also have to change our plans several times - and finally only meet the coordinators of Sudhaar Society, the association responsible for the Kick for Tolerance project, in Lahore before we take the bus to Islamabad.

Islamabad, 29.10 – 05.11.2022

Thanks to Brig. Rtd. Kamal and Nighat Aziz, two members of ICC Pakistan-Germany, and their family, our stay in Islamabad is well prepared and we can really enjoy ourselves in our accommodation, the Islamabad Club. Manuel joins us on Sunday morning and we explore the city together. The temperatures are very pleasant, the city is full of trees and the traffic is relaxed. While the imposing government buildings are all new, we recognize the impressive Shah Faisal Mosque. Unfortunately, our old house is no longer there, but we find the property and are shown around by the owner, the son of our former landlord. It's unbelievable how big the house and garden were! Today there are two houses there!



The family of Kamal and Nighat Aziz invited us to a fantastic dinner.



Islamabad is characterized by warm encounters. We spend a wonderful evening with the Aziz family with lots of interesting conversations and encounters as well as unique food. And the next day, we even have the honor of congratulating Kamal to his 70th birthday. Other highlights of the trip are the very warm encounters with friends of our parents from the 1990s in Islamabad, Shah Jehan and Gulalei Sayed and Abdul Qadir and his family.



An excursion into the mountains, to Murree and Nathiagali, is also a must. Thanks to the Aziz family, we are also very well accommodated here and a local driver even shows us his home village, where we also see a Koran school (Madrazza). As these schools, presumably financed by rich Islamic states, are free, some parents probably prefer them to state schools.

Back in Islamabad, we can visit the Cosmo Community Center of the Rotary Club Islamabad Cosmopolitan, which was built with the support of RC Weilheim, Germany.



Many women and their children are already waiting here for medical treatment, for which a whole bus of medical students arrives shortly afterwards under the care of a doctor in charge.



In the upper rooms, a group of women are learning to make clothes professionally - mostly for their families' own use, but also for the neighborhood. The top floor is not yet finished, but is still being extended. Klaus is surprised, however, that the water connection is not working, as it was during his visit in 2019. It must have been repaired, but recently broke down again.



Klaus also meets other Rotary contacts: the RC Islamabad Renaissance of Kamal Aziz invites him to a small informal meeting, where there is an exciting exchange - which unfortunately ends somewhat abruptly, as Imran Khan is assassinated and everyone hurries home for fear of roadblocks. Nevertheless, it is still possible to meet Mrs. Dr. Humaira and Ameer Ullah the next day, who are involved in projects supported by Rotary Germany.

I am particularly impressed by the meeting with Tahira Abdullah, a Pakistani human rights activist, who tells us a lot about her publications and her work. For example, she publishes studies on Pakistani school textbooks and in how far they promote hate speech, e.g. towards India.



There is so much we take with us from the trip! Especially the memory of hospitality and warmth. Open conversations, hugs, the joy of seeing each other again. Interesting insights into a (geopolitical) world view that seems foreign to us. Contrasts that we are also unable to resolve for ourselves - be it the luxury life that we were able to see and experience during these days and the poverty of so

many, the dust and garbage that is burned next to the street. Or the importance of patriarchy and at the same time the encounter with so many committed, courageous women who stand up - be it against blasphemy, hate speech, marital rape or for the disadvantaged of any kind. Oriental-looking bazaars, imposing forts and mosques, delicious food, green mountains...and in the mosque the tent camp of hundreds of soldiers to keep the protesters away from the mosque. Marvelling at the green Islamabad, how big our house was back then, how quickly people were invited in, how well organized and yet spontaneous and relaxed everything was, how comfortable shalwar kamis, the traditional Pakistani clothing. And that I immediately remembered that the hills behind Islamabad are called "Margalla Hills" 😊. All in all, it was simply a great gift to not only be able to better classify and understand so many impressions and stories from the past, but also to be able to add so many beautiful new things.

In Murree

