

Info letter about our activities in Dominica 2022

Date: 26 August 2022

Dear friends and charity members,

our last campaign was called "The Last Container". The name speaks for itself. Because of Corona, it took years before we even got it off the ground. There was already a delay on departure from Amsterdam because a heavy storm prevented the freighter from leaving port. And it is actually the last time that we want to organize our help for Dominica in this form. But one after another.



Loading of the container by our members M. Sylvester, H.M. Schemske, E. Schmidt, R. Schlueter, J. Gleich

As always, Engagement Global paid part of the transport costs. They work for the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and distribute the funds to the relevant charities.

As always, Engagement Global has made it clear to us that they will only cover the costs to the port of Roseau, Dominica. We shall bear the costs for overland transport; this roughly corresponds to our own share of 30% of the freight costs. This includes any port fees, customs duties, and ground transportation to the Marigot Hospital. That was the case until 2022. This time we had great difficulties because suddenly customs duties were added on our relief goods when we went to collect the container at the port. To top it all off, VAT, Value Added Tax, was added to the customs duties, something unprecedented.

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When our association member H. M. Schemske then approached the Ministry of Health in Roseau, they suggested he should sign their document about a "hand-over ceremony". We suspect that the government authorities in the capital wanted our medical supplies for themselves. In order to reduce these costs, we have been negotiating with the authorities – including the Prime Minister – for weeks, but nothing helped.



Arrival of the Sea-Container in Marigot, Dominica

In the end, our association's president, Ms. Mary Sylvester, decided to privately borrow the missing sum of about € 6.000.00 Euro in order to be able to give the relief supplies to the Marigot Hospital.



Distribution of relief goods in Marigot, Dominica

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Plans for new projects

To make sure that something like this doesn't happen again, we have decided to change our charity work and no longer ship overseas containers.

In the same year 2022, we had a good cooperation with the Classroom under Sail project from the Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. The famous sailing ship Thor Heyerdahl anchored in Portsmouth, Dominica. On board were 46 German students aged sixteen who wanted to help in Dominica to restore a house destroyed by Hurricane Maria.



Thor Heyerdahl – Classroom under Sail

This successful project has inspired us to operate completely beneath the radar of the Dominican government in the future. Our association member Hans Hochuli from Switzerland has already built two donated wooden houses in Marigot. Now he has brought a mobile sawmill to Dominica to process trees felled by the hurricane.

Our first plan for the new project is: Local construction companies in Marigot, using local craftsmen and local wood, will repair some still – after more than five years – defective roofs and houses in Marigot.

The plans and cost estimates are to be financed by donations. The contractors don't get any cash in hand because we pay the costs directly to the companies and the materials can then be picked up. This gives us good control over the funds donated or sponsored.

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For future projects, our association still has the opportunity to apply for funding through our long-standing partner Engagement Global in order to be able to plan and carry out larger projects. Further institutional funding from the federal government and the European Union can be applied for projects such as the construction of residential buildings, support for education or the training of young people, support for the local economy, improvement of the infrastructure and much more.

Sponsors for the projects, which are not limited to a single house, must continue to be sought so that we can realize our future projects. Because there is a personal contribution even with such large projects, we will continue to be very dependent on your donations.



Dominica – Atlantic Coast – Marigot

Please donate and share our plans with your friends, who should pass them on as well. There are great tasks ahead of us, and only together we can accomplish them.

Kind regards,

Mary Sylvester

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