

Why this Foundation? About Bettina Kattermann (1961 – 2012)

by Vera Kattermann



My sister loved her job as an internist and especially loved to work abroad. Her deep concern for people in the developing countries in general and especially in Burma gave us the idea to create a sponsorship for medical students in Burma.

As adolescent Bettina was an enthusiastic musician, but finally decided not to follow her passion and rather study medicine. While studying, she discovered a new passion: travelling. Part of her training she did in Paris as well as in Dakar (Senegal) and she undertook long trips to India, China, Russia and Latin America.

After her graduation as internist, she logically followed her passion and started to work abroad, leading her to Burma/Myanmar (Sittwe), Ukraine (Kiev), DR Kongo (Kabalo), China (Shenyang), Jemen (Sana'a) and the Caribbean (Turks- und Caicos Islands). Some of her jobs she undertook for *Medecins sans Frontieres*.

According with her passion for trips and for music, Bettina loved foreign languages. Often, she would train a foreign language as long as to converse with her patients directly. In whatever she did, my sister would engage herself very seriously. She was familiar with pain and sorrow herself and this made her more than apt to listen to her patients and to help them. She liked team-work a lot and was highly regarded for her humble and cooperative nature. She liked to joke and liked humor and irony in conversations.

While working in Sittwe (Burma/Myanmar) from 1998 till 2001 for *Medecins sans Frontieres*, she wrote especially happy letters. In Sittwe she organized malaria prevention and malaria control. Spreading out mosquito nets among the remote Burmese villages, she enjoyed knowing more about life and people in Burma. Bettina very much admired the politeness and kindness of the Burmese and felt attracted to it as it so much mirrored her own modest, polite and kind ways. At the same time she observed the political situation in Burma with concern and felt uneasy about the religious tensions in the country. Even if no member of a congregation herself, she still respected people in their belief and their spiritual search.

Often Bettina would show irritation about the enormously privileged standards of Western medicine in contrast to the difficult circumstances of the medical care in the developing countries. I am sure it is in her spirit to support the social and medical situation in Burma.

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