

## **Euro TCK 2013- Workshop: Maintaining Worlds- Erika& Katharina von Dessien**

### **Possible challenges when changing worlds**

#### TCKs

- You move between the cultures, but you're not 100% part of any of them. You might feel like belonging nowhere or being lost in the world.
- You only know bits and pieces of your "home culture", your parents are the only ones who introduce you to it. But you have no own experience with the "home culture".
- You can only be in one place at the time, while life at other places moves on without you; you change and people at other places as well. When you come back you might have changed and your friends, too.
- You have friends all over the world; it's difficult to keep up with all of them. But how do you decide with whom you stay in touch? Some friends don't have email or postal boxes and you might lose contact to them.
- Constant state of saying goodbye, uncertainty how long you will stay in one place. You have two options to respond to that:
  - a) withdrawal, staying superficial: you don't form any friendships to avoid getting hurt when saying goodbye
    - risk: no contacts or close friends, feeling of loneliness
  - b) all in, total engagement: you make friends quickly and use the short time you might have
    - risk: you have close friendships but hurt more when you leave, cannot keep up with all of them

#### Parents

- Getting used to a life without technical stuff, kitchen appliances etc. (microwave, washing machine, power cut), improvising for your children
- People watch you all the time and how you do things
- Balance between being a mom and being a missionary wife
  - how much do I engage with new cultures myself?
  - no friends around to ask for help
- Doubts that it was the right choice for children and the entire family
- Loss of contact to home
  - will friends and relatives forget us or no longer know us?
- Back home
  - get used to the Western "speed" again, expected duties
  - the family changed, become multi-cultural; how do you adapt to the home culture again?
  - no longer understanding the home culture, questioning old values
  - friends didn't try to understand us, expected us to be the same as before

### **Maintenance: What might help when changing worlds**

#### TCKs

- rather feel the pain and sadness for a while than feeling nothing at all
  - don't hold back tears, they cleanse the soul and make it ready for new experiences
- have a conscious goodbye, don't go without saying goodbye properly
  - idea: "RAFT" principle from David Pollock- Reconciliation, Assurance, Farewell, Think of Expectations
  - take small souvenirs with you, very personal things, e.g. clothes/everyday usage articles, sign flags, funny pictures
  - commit your friends to God, he will take care of them when you can't
- don't withdraw but get to know people, use the time you have even if it's short

- stay in contact with friends, use technology, e.g. skype, facebook, email, phones
- don't live in the past, use your experiences for the future; moving on doesn't mean you forget your friends, but memories can also keep you from discovering people and beautiful things in a different world
  - develop a healthy way of remembering: remember people and places well but don't idealize them, e.g. Scrapbook, an African/German day per week or month
- remind yourself that it is a privilege (not only a burden!) to carry more than one culture within you, don't deny or reject them, but appreciate and use them, e.g. companies look for multicultural and communicative people, you have contacts all around the world!
- remind yourself that God is faithful and he is the same at all times and at all places; even though we change- he doesn't!

### Parents

- carry on with routines from home (special food, toys)
  - family traditions like Christmas, birthday
  - but also traditions from host country
- food to remember home or the host country
- "special day" (English Day, German Day, eating with fingers)
- keep up contact with TCK friends, via email, skype, facebook
  - keep up with home, e.g. newspapers, DVDs, current music
  - also set up new relationships to TCKs in home country, e.g. migrant kids
- give your TCKs time to adjust and mourn
  - don't pressure them but be open when they want to talk
  - be interested in what they feel and go through
  - respect their way of solving problems
  - guide them to re-engage, meet other teenagers in school or church, hobbies
- expect challenges when back home (school, finding friends etc.)

### Home Base/Church

- Sunday schools stay in contact with TCKs, take offerings, pray, write letters
- missionaries are still part of the church, get all information about church life
- practical help before and during furlough (housing, schooling, utensils)
- prayer group specifically for missionaries, informs the church and raises support at home
- children of same age "adopt" a TCK and stay in touch while on field and take special care in everyday life