

## Our Buddies:

# The Baby Orphanage in "Zone B5", Sofia

The Baby Orphanage "St. Sofia" is located in Zona B5, on Gyeshvevo Str., about 30 minutes drive from AAS. The Orphanage is funded by the Ministry of Health and by donations, but has some permanent needs such as diapers, transportation for trips outside of the orphanage and medical care of the children (especially surgeries). It currently has about 70 children aged 0-3, divided in four groups. It is a clean and cheerful place, with a large playroom, a PE room and a nice big garden. The children in the Orphanage love and need communication with outside people and therefore the visits from the AAS students have always been an event for them.

The Anglo-American School has been supporting the Baby Orphanage for more than 5 years now. Since 2002 they have become the traditional Grade 7's buddy.

**Characteristics:** Funded by the Ministry of Health and donations. 60 - 100 children aged 0-3 (some come from minorities, some are mentally or physically retarded, some children are to be adopted), well-qualified staff (including speech problems and counseling specialist), clean and cheerful place. They have a large playroom and a PE room. Best visiting time: 8.30 - 11.30 a.m. The children's health is a big concern; visits are not allowed if there is a virus threat, so sometimes arranged visits can be cancelled. Visiting groups need to be small, 10-20 people at a time. Children enjoy short visits (20-40 min) - performances, coloring and especially free play. Classes who choose to be their buddies can prepare/ buy and give out simple toys (discuss what type is harmless and useful for this age) or simple coloring and picture books (i.e. a book of animals etc.). They love and need communication with outside people. A very small



group of their children (3-5 kids) could visit our Pre-School rooms for free play or a short video. Some holidays could be celebrated together (however, the orphanage gets loads of visits and donations at Christmas and Easter, and NONE in the rest of the time...).

**Needs:** VCR and tapes; pampers (3-4 per day for the little ones and 2 per day for the older ones would be ideal but is not happening at present - that makes 900 pampers per month!); a playing model of a house/ market/ hospital/ kitchen; clothes; coloring and picture books as simple as the kids' age level; pencils, crayons (not markers!), water paints, chalk; floor jig-saws; didactic toys (wooden, plastic, rubber); balls and balloons; wall decorations ( they would appreciate our students' pictures). At the moment they don't need more food.



**History:** This is our third year of communication. We phone them regularly. Grade 1 and 7 visited for Harvest in November and for Christmas in December 2001 (performance, food, clothes, toys donations).

**Goals for the future:** Pampers donations; Christmas presents; visits to the orphanage; spend time with the children playing, puppet performances.