



Association suisse des Amis  
de Soeur Emmanuelle

19, rue du Rhône  
1204 Genève  
T: +41 (0)22 311 20 22  
F: + 41 (0)22 310 21 93  
info@asase.org  
www.asase.org

## LETTER TO THE FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

N° 102

JANUARY 2009

Dear Friends,

First of all we would like to apologize for the time lapsed since our last newsletter: the one planned for October 2008 was cancelled after the death of our beloved Sister Emmanuelle.

Those of you who were able to attend the mass celebrated in her memory on the 16th of November (the day she would have been 100 years old) at the Basilique Notre-Dame in Geneva, have probably felt like us that this beautiful farewell resembled her: radiant (the sky was blue), warm (the basilica was full), lively (Father Jean-Daniel Balet's homily) and open to all faiths (were present Ouardiri Hafid, former spokesman for the mosque in Geneva, and Roland Benz, pastor). We were honoured by the presence of the Mayor of Geneva, Manuel Tornare, and the representative of the French Consulate.

We bet that from where she is now, our mentor will be able to help us more efficiently than ever in the pursuit of our action to save the most destitute.

**Yes! We particularly need her assistance in these times of mega-crisis, as we need yours, dear Friends, and that of all men and women of good will.**



As you will note from this letter, our association is going through a rough time and, like everyone at his own level, we are affected by the world financial and economic crisis.

I can imagine some understandable reactions: *"We already have enough to do with our own problems here. Is it time to think of the poor at the other end of the world?"*

Dear Friends, consider that for the people of Sudan and Haiti, the crisis has lasted for years -even decades- and often means a daily struggle for existence.

Yes indeed, today more than ever, it is unfortunately still necessary to act.

## NEWS FROM SUDAN

In Sudan, the soaring prices of basic foodstuffs has seriously affected the financing of SVDP projects: dura sorghum (a staple food for the poor) +129% in 2008, lentils +155%, rice +116%, onions +150%, spices +44% ...

But not only food products have undergone inflation; consider charcoal +30%, school fees +115% for primary schools, +61% for secondary ones...

The official figure for inflation in 2008 is 23%.



Of course, since we started our action in Sudan, we have already experienced three-digit inflation rates, but never combined with a stable local currency (a new situation due to the present oil exports). In other words, once changed into Sudanese pound, the monthly transfers planned in early 2008 did not enable Kamal and his team to operate at the level provided in the budgets.

We are not yet able to give you precise figures for 2008, as we did not receive the accounts of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. But **we estimate that our 2008 budget will be exceeded by 15%**. Anyway, **ASASE had to finance the overrun at the end of the year.**

In addition, according to the pieces of information given by Kamal and the first figures obtained from ASASE accounts (see below), we can already say that **2008 was a tough year and that 2009 will be a year of drastic cuts in our programs in Sudan.**

You should know that the budgets of the programs were established early 2008 with low estimates of donations collected. In other words, to prevent the risk of drawing on our reserves, we decided to reduce the programs of Saint Vincent de Paul, and **the 2008 budget -1 708 769 € - had been reduced by 28% compared to 2007.**

Most of the cuts concerned our **vocational training program, which budget had been reduced by 60%.**

And indeed, the activity of this program has been almost reduced to training the children of our farms. **The number of adults who have attended our courses has fallen from 1967 in 2007 to 786 this year (- 60%),** and more than 60% of this shrink total were financially supported by NGOs such as Zoa or *Save The Children UK*, who have entrusted SVDP with the training of adults.

But the counterpart of this strong decline in our activities was that the layoff costs have been particularly heavy this year -nearly 60 000 €-, given that the Sudanese law guarantees 7 months salary in compensation.

**As for the budget of our Baby Feeding program, it was reduced by 12%,** and the number of children officially registered in our centres has decreased from 9050 to 8010.

Eventually, only one centre has been closed. Another centre (Marol Chok) was saved at the last minute from closure thanks to the combined efforts of our friends from *Operation Orange* and *ADE*. Thanks to them and to their donors, 470 children have had their daily meal in 2008.

**A new Scottish donor** (specifically the international organization *Mary's Meals*, run by *Scottish International Relief - SIT*) has contributed to our "Street Children" program.

The work of *Mary's Meals* being usually to support projects that provide daily meals in schools, their contribution for 2008 has funded the cost of one such meal for 166 children of our program.

However, despite the efforts of our donors, given the inflation and the general difficulties of SVDP, a number of measures on this program had to be taken earlier this year by Kamal:

- Meals will be provided 3 days per week instead of 5.
- Parents will have to pay a monthly SDG 6 (3 CHF) per child.
- Food quantities will be reduced by 40%.



**The latter measure will also concern the Street Children program. Finally, the number of drugs distributed through our Medical program will be halved.**

However, Kamal and his teams keep on going ahead and **the construction of our first vocational training centre in the south of the country can finally start**, after many months of delay due to the presence of squatters on the former site and then, after SVDP decided to chose another land (still donated by the Church of Juba), due to bureaucratic delays, quite frequent in a region ravaged by war. The funding of this project is almost entirely ensured.

## NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

**Donations from Switzerland as well as from abroad fell by 40% compared to 2007.**

Five major municipalities in the canton have not considered it necessary to support us again this year. ASASE is often regarded as a "wealthy" association, because it has built up reserves. How can we make donors realize that these reserves are essential as we are financing long-term programs (like the "Street Children" one)?

For that matter, for the third consecutive year, **ASASE has to draw on its reserves** to ensure the continuation of the programs.

Operating expenses were equivalent to those of 2007, despite CHF 12 000 paid this year for the rent (last year, it was offered free of charge by the landlord).

**We estimate that half of our free reserves** (sums not blocked to ensure a six months normal running of the programs) **have been drawn on during 2008.**

### CALL FOR YOUR GENEROSITY TO HELP SUDAN

**We must react now to ensure the sustainability of our programs.**

Thousands of children depend on us for their survival, their shelter, their education, their health. Tens of thousands of adults may find themselves without water, without care, without prospects.

Of course, our deepest wish is to become unnecessary or redundant!

But unfortunately it is not yet the case in this country, nor in Haiti (see below).

**Yalla! like Sister Emmanuelle used to say, it is not time to falter!**

As far as our association is concerned, we are working seriously to find new donors. At the end of 2008, we have contacted 500 notaries and 1500 companies in Switzerland. And we are setting up a new organization to raise funds from companies targeted more specifically.

**But we really need you, dear Friends. Every donation matters, whatever its amount. Remember that 98% of your donation will be used on site; and that with 45 CHF for example, you feed during 6 months one child living in the IDP camps.**

## NEWS FROM HAITI

As every year, Jean-Claude François spent several weeks in Haiti, both last summer and this winter.



Haitians were spared nothing, **with the hurricanes Dean, Gustav and Hannah that caused hundreds of deaths last summer**, and the disastrous economic situation...

Since January 2008, **global inflation** has been 18%, and 100% for some staple products: in April 2008, the price of rice (per 23 kg bag) has increased in a few days from 35 to 70 dollars.

During the previous months, the price of corn, beans and edible oil had increased by 40%. This situation caused turmoil, riots and looting, with many casualties (6 persons died and 170 were injured). The uprising led to the resignation of the Prime Minister, Jacques Edouard Alexis. Everybody has been affected by the general **tension**, including Jean-Claude during his stay, or some of our friends of Haiti Cosmos: a former employee, now working for *Vision sur le Monde*, was taken hostage. Fortunately, he has been quickly released by the UN police. Jean-Claude had to be very careful whenever he was going out, even to teach at Polytec. His house was broken into, and his computer stolen.

But nothing can stop Jean-Claude's determination.

He knows that schools like Polytec are of primary importance for the development of the country, as reminded in this extract from "Le Monde Diplomatique" of August 2008: *"The country is lacking skilled people, especially in the remote provinces. This is particularly true when it comes to finding teachers for the primary teacher training college, or to recruiting developers and technicians. When you finally find one, the system has most probably already made him someone no longer accountable for his actions, or functioning according to a mechanism of reverence or contempt... And for the millions of unqualified adults, there is nothing! Unemployed, they resort to material or spiritual assistance, or to rebellion! Yet the development of the country depends on specific efforts on that matter."*

**To this day, 76 adults graduated out of Polytec with a certificate** in Accounting, Business Management or Agriculture. 130 students were following the winter session this year.

The 4 new clinics that were opened in December 2007 are meeting the demand of about 25 000 people; they bring to **27 the total number of dispensaries created by Haiti Cosmos** on the central plateau of Hinche. Once a quarter, our medical assistants get a one-day training on a subject related to medical news. This training is provided by a doctor of medicine.

Haiti Cosmos collaborates with the NGO *Zanmi Lassanté*, which is regularly using its clinics and their staff to distribute drugs and increase public awareness of AIDS and tuberculosis.

Similarly, in the dispensaries of Haiti Cosmos, the NGO *Vision sur le Monde* is giving medicines and food to pregnant women.

As for the **laboratory of medicinal plants Phyto Cosmos**: after having benefited from the training and supervision of the team of pharmacists from the University and the Hospital of Geneva, Haitian technicians keep on **producing five medications -which are vital in this region-** to treat influenza, gastritis, malaria, fever, and mycosis. We try to keep our production cost under control: the cost of a treatment is CHF 1,60.

In early January, Jean-Claude sent us these few lines from there: *"We are bringing out two new medications: one against hypertension and the other against vaginal infections (80% of the women from the Central Plateau are affected by this problem because of the very polluted water here). The first one - Hypertens- is extracted from the hibiscus *Sadfarida* which seeds were shipped from Mali. We just had*

*our first harvest. The second one -Chlora- is a kind of chlorine -similar to the Dakin solution- that we produce by electrolysis. Both drugs have begun to be delivered to our dispensaries and to pharmacies."*

We have submitted a request to the Ministry of Health to have our dispensaries and the laboratory officially recognized.

The farm workers still produce seedlings in nurseries, and transplant them in the field. Unfortunately, despite the presence of a team of security guards on the site, **a fire has destroyed thousands of trees, i.e. 60% of our medicinal plants.** The land had not been properly cleaned up, and in dry season, the grass can burn very quickly.

**ASASE has helped Jean-Claude to prevent this kind of problem by funding the purchase of a tractor,** a reversible plow and a full harrow; with this material, his team can weed the 120 ha land before the drought, and replant between the trees some medicinal plants, some fruit trees and peanuts; the harvest will be sold on the market of Hinche and will help making the association more autonomous. Jean-Claude writes: *"Employees have duly celebrated this acquisition, and they asked me to thank you and the committee for this wonderful Christmas present"*.

Finally, **the primary school Séramond welcomes 140 students from aged 5 to 15.** Some of them are living two hours away. They receive one hot daily meal.

In 2009, 15 pupils from Séramond will sit for the examination to get the school-leaving diploma.

We went through the procedures to have this rural school recognized by the authorities. We now wait for their decision, knowing that the state is only spending 8% of its budget in education (half of the sum spent for the debt repayment), and is providing schooling for only one child out of six.

*"2008 ended very well. All our employees received their salaries and we have no debt. "*

With these good news from Jean-Claude, who is facing Haitian adversity with his customary serenity,

accompanied by Sister Emmanuelle's smile, a month before her death, when she welcomed my wife and myself in her usual radiant way,

I tell you goodbye, thank you in advance for your support,

As without you, nothing would be possible,



**Michel Bittar**  
**Président**



(We had the pleasure to talk with her for over two hours.

She had kept all her mental alertness.

It was amazing to see her bright eyes in a tiny shrivelled body.

No manifestation whatsoever of self-pity. She was glowing with a joy that irradiated any person in contact with her.