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LETTER TO FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

No. 77

Christmas 2000

Dear Friends,

News from Sudan

I am pleased to give you the following news just received from Kamal:

Rakubas:

The second term examinations are about to start. Yes, indeed! In Sudan the school year finishes at the end of March and we are already at the end of the second term.

We recently had the visit of two representatives of CAFOD (the British Caritas); one was the Bishop of Leeds and the other Mr. Bob Rees. They visited four schools and, from their comments, we understand they were impressed with the order and discipline they found. (On a personal note I sometimes think that parents and teachers in Europe must often look back with nostalgia to the time when a child knew how to keep quiet in class and teachers could make themselves heard!)

Our schools won the cup for the football competitions that take place among private and Government schools.

We did not receive our quota of books this year due to a dispute between the Ministry of Education and the publishing department. We are missing some 60,000 books! However our teachers are doing their best to cope with the situation.

About a hundred of the teachers who we trained have left us. Some have gone to posts in the private sector whilst many have gone abroad to Egypt.

Farms and Homes

We are pleased to be able to report that we have opened a third house to receive young girls. Some fifteen new girls are now living in the new house and also attending school. Before coming here these girls were more or less abandoned by their relatives and were living in terrible conditions. Our social workers are doing their best to solve the problems being faced by these poor girls.

One of our boys, *Ibrahim Yousif*, living in a new farm, Hag Yousif, won the first prize of a drawing competition in spite of his handicap of having only one hand! Another boy, Aquire Aget, was designated by the authorities of the secondary school he attends as the best pupil in the school due to his good behaviour, sense of responsibility and obedience... A meritorious performance for this former child of the streets.

Two of our senior social workers and four of our farm boys followed an extensive training programme by the society SAVE THE CHILDREN, USA in Child Research. (We do not have more precise information on what this consists of.)

As mentioned in an earlier report, a number of our students have gained entry into universities and other institutes of higher education. We are pleased to report that a further ten students have now been accepted into university including one to study medicine. We now have a total of 44 students in higher education of which four are in the Medical School – a discipline accepting only those students gaining the highest marks in their final school examinations. Kamal is particularly proud of these achievements and thanks the Lord for this crowning of our efforts.

Vocational training

We now have some twenty workshops in which young people have the opportunity of obtaining professional training which can help them become self reliant.

A few weeks ago 104 boys from our farm in Burri and nearby graduated. A further 179 boys and girls from our different centres will graduate shortly. A number of these have already found work. A total of 706 young people are benefiting from this programme. Although our finances are limited, and this training involves the purchase of materials, we are making every effort to continue this programme. We are also planning to continue our programme on health awareness, particularly for the displaced persons. Mr. Stansilous Mogo is the person responsible for this programme.

Prison Project

We have discontinued the provision of supplementary food to the children of mothers in Omdurman ladies prison since a new organisation has agreed to provide three meals a day to the children there. We will monitor the situation to make sure that this service does continue.

Kamal ends his letter by thanking Sister Emmanuelle, the President and all the members of our Association for their continued support without which the children of Sudan would find it much more difficult to have a proper life. He extends to all our generous donors his Christmas greetings and prays that God may bless them and their families.

News from Haïti

Jean-Claude François is back in Geneva and has been able to brief me on recent developments.

The Botanical Garden

The mission of Mr. Falquet and Dr. Graz to the central plateau of Haïti was greatly appreciated and at least sixty health visitors, already trained by Maria Eléna Pasteur, participated regularly in the training programme made available by these two specialists in medicinal plants. Our two scientists were thoroughly prepared and had taken with them sufficient reference material to distribute to everyone. The seminar lasted two full weeks and twenty of the participants obtained a certificate indicating that they passed with distinction the final examination.

It has been finally decided that the existing garden will serve as a nursery and thirty or so of the most beneficial and non-dangerous species will be selected for cultivation as against the eighty species being cultivated at present. This nursery will supply the health visitors who are most anxious to prove themselves useful, forty-one of which have formed the ATP (Association for Treatment by Plants). A project to set up a network of simple, local centres throughout the plateau is currently under consideration. This would allow the health visitors to cover every locality and make available treatment to people in the surrounding areas and also provide a place to sleep overnight and stock their products. Two Frenchmen living in the nearby countryside are very interested in this idea. They have been trained and are planning to start producing plants on a six-hectare plot to supply the needs of the local population.

The Dispensary

In spite of the absence of Amélia Pasteur this continues to function under the supervision of Mr. Joseph Rochenel whom she trained. The dispensary treats an average of ten patients per day; a figure that is starting to rise as the local population starts to have confidence in Amélia's replacement. A Haïtian doctor, head of the medical faculty of Port-au-Prince University, has agreed to take over responsibility for the dispensary whilst keeping the services of Mr. Rochenel. A contract will be drawn up to specify the details of this co-operation.

The Mutual Credit of Haïti (MCH)

The MCH is presently completely autonomous and comprises 1.800 members. Jean-Claude François manages the bank. A catholic association (Universal Fraternity) visited the project and they promised that in 2001 they would grant \$ 100.000 in three instalments to implement production loans to peasants.

In the meanwhile five new co-operatives were created. Our project was found good enough to imitate...

Three trainees from IMEC are now working in the MCH while two MCH employees went to study in IMEC!

Institute of Management and Economy of the Centre (IMEC)

The “management” section of the Institute comprises now 60 students. Two French teachers, on the pay roll of the French Co-operation, give a number of courses under Jean-Claude’s active supervision.

Computer tuition has now started thanks to the six computers we agreed to purchase. The school expects to award management diplomas to four or five of the sixteen students who will sit the examinations this year having followed the four-year course.

The accountancy section awarded diplomas to thirteen students who successfully passed their examinations this year, out of the original forty who had enrolled.

One reason for satisfaction, and not the least, is that all the former IMEC students find immediate employment either in governmental institutions or with an NGO. This even applies to students who did not manage to graduate!

Construction “BATI-BRIQUES”

This project is stagnating for the time being because the young people who had formed an Association proved incapable of managing it. A contract for a new building, which was about to be concluded, was not signed. It will be necessary to find a responsible person, capable of taking the leadership of this Association. Enquiries were made with Mr. Georges Garnier, an engineer, and it seems that he would be prepared to undertake this task.

Jean-Claude François asked me explicitly to add the following few words on his behalf at the end of this letter:

“Jean-Claude François conveys to you all his sincerest thanks for your continuing support and backing in this extremely difficult mission in Haiti. He renews his thanks to the Committee of the Swiss Association of Friends of Sister Emmanuelle and in particular to its President, who made the cause of the Central Plateau of Haiti his own and spared no effort for the success of the different projects.”

All I have to add for you, Committee members and friends, are my best wishes for Christmas and a year 2001 according to your heart’s desire.

Your President

Michel Bittar