

*SWISS ASSOCIATION OF
THE FRIENDS OF
SISTER EMMANUELLE*

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LETTER TO THE FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

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Dear Friends,

I should like first of all to wish all of you good health and happiness for the New Year. It is, in no small way, thanks to your faithfulness, since our Association was formed almost 23 years ago, that we have been able to financially support our friends operating in Sudan and Haïti. Even though you are little more than 1100 in number in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, you have, in good years and bad, provided a quarter of our annual support for the work carried out in the field by Kamal and Jean Claude. Thank you and well done!

In case you are interested in knowing how we are able, year after year, to meet our financial goals, I can provide you with the following information:

The remainder of the funds come from ASMAE – the French Association of the Friends of Sister Emmanuelle –, from the German-speaking part of Switzerland, thanks to the excellent work carried out by the Höffler family in sensitising people in and around Aarau, and from Mrs Hanna-Laure Bayer working in Graz, Austria, who has accomplished an enormous amount of work for almost fifteen years. Totally devoted to the cause of Sister Emmanuelle, and amazed by what Kamal is able to achieve, Mrs. Bayer, almost single-handedly, succeeds in providing a significant amount of funding every year..

One or two Foundations support us very generously for specific projects.

Several municipalities in the Canton of Geneva allocate us funds and, in 2001, we also received funding from the Canton of Geneva itself.

To everyone a big thank you for the magnificent result in the year which has just ended.

News from Sudan

In his latest letter written last December, Kamal indicates that all our programmes are proceeding according to plan, including the very important “Save the Saveable” project of the Catholic Church, the school project to which we contribute in a modest way. It was for this project, which provides education and a small meal each day for 52,000 children in 85 “rakubas” that our fund-raising efforts were targeted in 2001 because this project’s very survival was threatened as a result of the cutting back of funding from its principal donors. The Archbishop of Khartoum has set up a committee, consisting of prominent members of the local society, to examine all aspects of this project but its final conclusions are not expected until the summer.

In November, 155 young adults who had been rescued from the streets many years ago and had been brought up in our homes and farms completed this stage of their life with us and, with a farewell nest egg, left us to find their own way in life. As you can well imagine this was not an easy thing to do but it was necessary, nevertheless, to make room for younger newcomers.

In December, 249 young men and women completed their apprenticeships in their chosen field and received certificates that will help them find work more easily.

Mr. Nicolas Borsinger, Secretary General of the *Pro Victimis* Foundation, who has done so much to help our Association, visited Khartoum recently to evaluate our various programmes. He writes as follows:

Dear Sir,

Following my visit to Sudan in December and our recent meeting I summarise below the main conclusions of this visit.

During the four days I spent there I was able to examine the details of the many projects being conducted by the St. Vincent de Paul Society: farms, centres for abandoned children or orphans, training programmes for adolescents and adults, foster homes, education programmes for displaced children, etc.

As I mentioned to you, the thing that impressed me most about the education and food programme, the size of which represents both its strength, because of its enormous impact, and its weakness, due to the difficulties in financing it, is that it constitutes a sort of lifeline in the frightening emptiness of the camps which ring Khartoum. I still find it difficult to believe that, with more than 60 children to a class, and with a crying need for teaching material, a fully satisfactory education can be provided. But even if I were right, the important role this programme plays in integrating the children into society, in the structure it gives to the community, and the challenge it provides to the teaching staff, suffice in themselves to justify this programme.

With regard to the foster homes, I was impressed with the determination of the young people who had completed their schooling, particularly the girls, to go on to further studies. I trust that these hopes, which lit up their eyes, can be realised. But let us not forget those who do not have the capacity for a university education. These also need to find a more modest project to help them better fit into the society.

I cannot finish without mentioning the vocational training projects. Don't ask me why, because there is no qualitative judgement behind it, but I was particularly impressed by those designed for adults, sewing and painting for the women and leatherwork, woodwork and construction for the men. These are modest projects but again they give me the impression that they provide a purpose in life, a sense of autonomy and the sharing in an activity without which the people would be completely destitute. The fact that the man in charge of the vocational training could tell me what had happened to all his past students will remain with me a long time. One speaks a lot, and quite rightly so, about the evaluation of the impact of development projects. Here was a man who, without ever having been instructed to do so, had understood this concept and, without even realising it, he was carrying out the same sort of administrative task as Mr. Jourdain. By recording in his notebook those who worked in the market, those who had found other jobs, etc. he makes it possible for the St. Vincent de Paul Society and other interested parties to have a much better idea about the effectiveness of such a project.

It is clear that brief visits have the tendency to exaggerate either the failings or positive aspects of what one sees, but at least after some years of experience one knows this. The least I can say is that everything I witnessed confirmed my opinion that this work merits our support. I hope therefore to continue to be able to find all the support necessary in pursuit of this wonderful endeavour.

*Nicolas Borsinger
Fondation Pro Victimis*

Just one last point on Sudan: I would like to remind you that 73 young adults, former orphans from our homes and farms, are completing their studies in universities and other places of higher education in Sudan. Isn't this a marvellous result? And this number could well double if we were able to raise the necessary funds although this may prove difficult in view of the pressing needs from many quarters.

News from Haïti

Jean-Claude François and his family will not be back in Geneva until the end of February, just a little too late for us to provide you with the very latest news. However, I have been able to talk to him by telephone and he is absolutely delighted by the progress of the various projects. Some of these are finally coming to fruition. A significant amount of help received this year from the Canton of Geneva, the Commune of the City of Geneva and other communes in the canton is financing the construction of a total of thirteen dispensaries and health centres on the Hinche plain. Their construction is well underway and plans for bringing them into service are being made. At the inauguration of the first of the health centres more than 300 sick people formed a queue to receive treatment!

At the end of October Amélia completed the training of sixty medical assistants and, on the basis of an examination, selected the best thirteen to take charge of the new health centres. The “Medicinal Plants” project is definitely taking off! Let us hope it finds its cruising speed for a long life.

In the middle of October the new academic year of POLYTEC (the Central Polytechnic School, formerly the Management Institute) started with eighty students. We have decided to be a little less ambitious in the curriculum. Jean-Claude believes it is more important to concentrate on the financial management of small businesses rather than the more advanced techniques of the business world that would have little practical application on the Hinche plain.

Thank you once again for all your support.

Michel Bittar
President

Friends of the Association who are living in the Canton of Geneva may obtain from us a tax certificate for any donations that they make.