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de Soeur Emmanuelle

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LETTER TO FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

N° 90

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Dear Friends,

There is a lot of news to share at this end of year: first Kamal reports on the progress of our projects; then Jean Sage, from Operation Orange, who has just come back from Sudan where he visited our programs, tells us how much amazed he was by the professionalism and the enthusiasm of our staff; finally Jean-Claude Francois, back from a stay at Hinche, Haïti, gives us his report on the situation over there.



NEWS FROM SUDAN

The situation in Darfour remains critical and has demanded renewed spirit and extra work from Kamal and his team. They must organize assistance, without neglecting the long-term projects we are financing. These projects are developing very well indeed, as you shall see in Kamal's report :

Programs for street children (homes and farms)

- As we already informed you, we had to give up our farms in Burri and Hag Yousif. We then reacted by creating new centres in our new farm in Hag Yousif and by enlarging the buildings in Mayo.
- More than 106 new children - some very young - were accommodated in our farm of Gebel Awlia. This was made possible thanks to the generous gift we received from Caritas Austria, which we thank wholeheartedly.
- We were also given the green light from Geneva to purchase a land where a new farm is to be built. The chosen land is pretty large, which will enable us to set up a plan for the future.
- A new home will open at the beginning of 2005 to accommodate 20 young women.

Food project for small children

- With your approval and your financial assistance, as well as those of Caritas and Mission Austria, we currently have 16 operating centres, where we give their breakfast meal to more than 6000 babies, 5 or 6 days a week (depending on which centres).
- It is a very satisfactory project, for these babies come from very poor families, and for a great deal of them this meal is the only one they get in the day.
- The only problem is the increasing number of children coming to the centres: for instance a centre meant to feed 300 babies is often visited by 500 to 600 heartrending crying babies whom we cannot just send back with an empty belly!

Medical program

- We opened 2 new "Friday dispensaries" in Gabarona. They already are very much requested by the population, and we thus have now 4 centres like these, to which we provide drugs.
- All centres have laboratories, which enable the doctors to improve the quality of the provided care.

Health and first aid courses

- Hundreds of men and women profit by these programs which are run in cooperation with the Red Crescent.
- Trainees are now able to do injections or to set perfusions to their sick relatives.
- These programs are increasingly popular and many people are asking for more.
- Nearly 400 trainees from the camps of Omdurman and Hag Yousif recently obtained their diploma, each one receiving 2 certificates. Some were even hired as male nurses by the Ministry for Health, which represents an official recognition of the value of our program.
- The program to increase people awareness of AIDS dangers is going on; we recently held a session in a school for girls.

Vocational training workshop

- It is a great pleasure to tell you that we keep on training hundreds of young men and women; members of the last batch have just received their certificate!
- We try to keep in touch with the graduates to see whether they manage to earn their own living; It is also very useful to find out which professions are more in demand on the work market, so that we can adjust our workshops accordingly.

Assistance to the displaced populations in the camps of Darfur

- Thrice, we have carried out food and material supplies to the victims of this conflict in the west of Sudan. The fourth supply will start soon.
- Our thanks go to the generous donors who allowed us to set about this project, in particular the Swiss Association of Friends of Sister Emmanuelle, SVDP England and Missio Austria.
- We will keep on with this project as long as we get the necessary funds.

Micro-projects

- To increase our incomes, we have bought 10 Friesian cows which produce 250 litres of milk per day; part of it goes to our children, the rest is sold. We hope to buy 10 others of them.
- We also have lots of hens, which provide us with eggs and meat. The sales incomes will allow us to develop our breeding.

We have received the visit of a delegation leaded by Jean Sage. They could realize the number and quality of our projects. We thank them for travelling all the way from France to come among us.

The Xmas season is soon upon us, and we take the opportunity to send all our best wishes to Sister Emmanuelle, to the Presidents and members of her European associations, to the generous donors and sponsors, to all those who enable us to complete these programs, and to the people who can benefit from them. We really want to tell you all how much my team of Saint Vincent de Paul in Khartoum and myself are grateful for your precious support to our programs.

We ask God to bless you and to reward you in His own way, making 2005 a happy and prosperous year.

Kamal
National Secretary

As Kamal just told us, Jean Sage went to Sudan accompanied by Sister Sarah and two young French devoted to our cause; here are excerpts of his report, followed by a note written by Muriel Tran Ngoc Phu, who was one of them:

Testimony of "Friend Jean", coming back from Sudan:

[...] We come back deeply moved and full of admiration for Kamal Tadros and his friends of «*Saint Vincent de Paul Society*»'s extraordinary, generous and effective dedication to the cause of the needy. How nicely welcomed we have been! And what a joy to see all the improvements made in the farms, like in the "Gebel Farm", in the professional centres, in the installations of water spots with well and pump; bought in 1992, the "Orange Truck" is still bringing life everyday to tens of thousands of "displaced people"!

And oh! The magnificent efforts deployed to inform and to heal, with the assistance of doctors from the "Red Crescent"! The fierce struggle against AIDS, the respiratory diseases, malaria and all kinds of infections! One feels quite small in front of these "superwomen/-men" fighting for justice: with a heroic sense of self-sacrifice, they fight all forms of destitution. Poverty continues to spread, as crowds of refugees have arrived - and are still arriving - first from the South, then from Nuba mounts and now from Darfur. [...] We have been driven all around the capital, on endless chaotic tracks, to reach these camps for displaced people, each camp separated from the others by several kilometres in the desert. It is in these camps that Kamal and his friends have set up 16 "Baby Feeding" centres, which feed everyday 4000 2-to-7 years old children. There is such a lack of room and means that, when they are 8 years old, these children are regarded as adults, able to survive by searching in the refuse, begging, rendering tiny services etc.

Being a rather recent zone for displaced people, and far away from everything, Karia totally lacks any infrastructures. Here, in the three "Baby Feeding" centres (each one gathering around 200 children), I underwent the strongest and most painful emotion: the faces of exhausted children were so expressionless -neither joy nor pain-, as if these kids were reduced to a "state of digestive tracts"! Some were already there, others were arriving (God knows where from) and were trying to find a place to sit down and passively wait for the dish, without even noticing us! In the other "Baby Feeding" centres, kids used to hold their hands out, or even to clap, singing and smiling, the way African children can smile, their faces enlightened. In Karia, hands were only moving to pick up food from the dish, and mouths were opening to gulp it down... It fills our hearts with pity but also with thankfulness, for at least these children are saved, and soon they will smile like the other ones!

There are certainly other camps to discover and to bring assistance to, but we are short of money and vehicles. Kamal and his team need another 4x4, bigger and more reliable (we broke down twice) - Estimated cost: 50 000 \$ (38 200 €). We cannot just withdraw this sum from what we give to the Sudanese children, as it would prejudice other essential actions. There would be no use achieving new undertakings, if we were to stop what is already working. I am sure that once more, thanks to all our friends, we will take up this new challenge, and together "Succeed in Serving".

Jean Sage

For the attention of Kamal and his team

We wish to thank you from the bottom of our heart for all that we received during our stay, when we accompanied Sister Sara and Jean Sage.

We are deeply impressed by the quality of the work done by your team, and by the generosity of each one of you. Be sure that we are decided to be sincere and active witnesses of this good work, and that we and our friends will help perpetuate it, as partners of Operation Orange and ASASE.

We are glad we could immerse ourselves in the reality of field, so that we shall be more effective in our action.

We also thank Sister Sara and Jean Sage for allowing us to share this great experience with them, and also Mr Bittar for being trustful and most helpful.

We send our best regards to your wife Madeleine, whom we thank for her warm reception, and lots of love to your dear little children.

Receive, dear Kamal, for you, your family and your whole team, our devoted gratitude and all our admiration.

Muriel and Salvatore Tran Ngoc Phu

NEWS FROM HAITI

The still occurring upheavals in Haiti did not make it possible for us to give you news of our programs in our previous letter, and we were expecting the worst. As the dust had somewhat settled, Jean-Claude François decided to go there to make sure the programs were still going on. His report is positive, though some difficulties have arisen:

During my stay in the Central Plateau of Haiti last month, I visited our technical college (Polytec) and each of our 21 dispensaries. I met the administrative staff, the teachers, the pupils, the medical assistants as well as the guards.

The inhabitants of the Central Plateau are currently most worried by:

- A) A significant wave of migration coming from the Gonaïves -where the floods killed thousands of people-, to the nearest region, the Central Plateau. Thousands of homeless people and orphan children find themselves now in Hinche, with no resources whatsoever.
- B) The supporters of the former president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, have created a wave of panic all around the country. Night and day, armed with rifles and knives, they shoot in every direction and shout for the return of their leader. They even came and shot in the court of my house...! There are many victims, some of which, even among the U.N. soldiers, have been beheaded.

As regards our programs over there, I was much relieved to see we did not suffer any human or material loss. After being closed for a few months, the school has reopened. Despite the insecurity, our assistants have never stopped going to their working places to provide medical care to the population. However, there still remain some difficulties we cannot really overcome yet:

Technical college:

We currently have 60 students in Polytec, who follow a training program either in accountancy, management or agriculture. Let me remind you that in 9 years, the school has trained 26 accountants, 16 managers and 4 agricultural technicians, who have all found a job. This is very encouraging and we thank you all for having helped them indeed. However I confess that I have been rather surprised last week when I saw that there were 73 new students registered on the list for the start of the new academic year in January 2005. We then expect a total number of pupils of approximately 150 in 2005, which requires more financing and a better management...!

The reasons for this increasing number of applications are the growing insecurity in Port-au-Prince (parents prefer to keep their children in Hinche), the structural inflation in Haiti (30% per year) and the lack of means of modest families.

Health Program:

Dispensaries are much less busy. This is not for lack of sick persons, on the contrary. People just do not have enough money to buy drugs. In the pharmacies of some dispensaries, I have found out-of-date drugs. Heart broken, I requested their destruction, knowing perfectly well that the assistants bought them with their own money, hoping to sell them back and make a small profit.

However, in St-Teresa Hospital and in Cange, the only two hospitals of the Central Plateau, an American NGO is offering free drugs to people having AIDS and Tuberculosis. I have been told that this organization would also give them a monthly food subsidy. Consequently, many patients pretend to have tuberculosis and/or be HIV-positive, so these hospitals are always overcrowded (around 500 people per day).

Garden of medicinal plants:

Our assistants showed some signs of discouragement. Some of them have to walk several hours to go to the dispensaries, and sometimes they return home having found only one or two patients. We thus decided to start the project on which we have been working for several months, namely a production centre for medicinal plants. We have hired a technician and two farm workers to set up a medicinal plants nursery. We aim to provide the dispensaries with 5 kinds of drugs, in syrup form and powder bags. These are local plants which are known to have a curative effect on malaria, mycoses, flu, gastritis and fever.

SPECIAL REQUEST:

I met the chemist who is responsible for the NGO “Zanmi La Santé”, and I offered him to use our dispensaries and our assistants to distribute drugs to the patients from the countryside who have AIDS and/or tuberculosis. He agreed to provide us with a batch of drugs every month, provided that we can get a vehicle (pick-up). Such a vehicle, which would cost around 30' 000 dollars, could also be used to transport plants towards most of the dispensaries. We would be so happy if you could help us buy this vehicle! Do not forget to mark on the postal check: “Pick-up Haiti”.

We thank Mr Nicolas Borsinger, director of Pro Victimis, who visited the dispensary of Hinche this year and who gave us news and also some precious pieces of advice regarding the management of our

health program. We also thank the municipalities of Geneva and all the donors who support us year after year. Finally we thank the Swiss Association of Friends of Sister Emmanuelle, and its president in particular, our untiring ambassador, Mr Michel Bittar.

Geneva, the 1st of December 2004
Jean Claude François

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

This autumn, our dear Sister came back to Switzerland once again and she travelled through the country to help us bring our Association and its work to light. Everywhere, the reception was enthusiastic: Sister Emmanuelle does indeed have the knack to move her audience:

To close the year celebrating the 25th anniversary of our association, we had planned an intensive program for Sister Emmanuelle. It started in GENEVA, on Monday the 18th and Tuesday the 19th of October. Our garbage-collector Sister is invited by the town administrative councillor of Geneva, Mr Manuel Tornare, to talk about her life and her faith to the young people who have just attained their majority. The future citizens are charmed by the authenticity of her message and the way she speaks their language and encourages them to try and develop their qualities. Later, she met Mr Carlo Lamprecht -State councillor in charge of the department of economy, employment and foreign affairs-, who hopefully will accept to make a grant to support our programs in Sudan.

The following days, our famous sister discovers a new canton: NEUCHÂTEL. She is welcomed by a cheerful audience. A bank organizes an evening rally during which she awards the "citizen merit" to the *Jeanne-Antide Centre* in *La Chaux-de-Fonds*, which celebrates its jubilee. The lecturer adjusts herself to each audience: her message is straightforward - she believes in God but also in Man. "Helping Man is highly important, for if one believed only in God without doing anything for Man, it would be lost, it would be in vain." The most important thing in life is to go towards the others and to share. With this aim in view, a meeting is organized with Mrs Perrinjaquet, State councillor in charge of finances and social affairs. Touched by this woman of outstanding personality, this smart politician undertakes to look into the projects of our association.

From politics, we skip to the religious field. A mass gathers crowds at the Red Church, in the heart of the city. Finally to end our stay in Neuchâtel, a meeting takes place at the *aula des Jeunes Rives*. At her entrance, Sister Emmanuelle is given a standing ovation. People came from all around the canton to listen to her; she speaks right to the heart of Man. It is the heart that feels God, not the mind. We are driven by our heart to act, to act in favour of the destitute who suffer from injustice and malnutrition in Europe or elsewhere. Her message is convincing. It moves the audience and cheers it up. What a magnificent testimony!

Then on the 7th and 8th of November, Sister Emmanuelle is led to the University of FRIBOURG. She is invited to join in a meeting of "PRAY AND TESTIFY" which gathers 1500 people. To pray, for her, is to make silence to connect with God and surrender to his love. As for testifying, she speaks about her work and the five associations that carry it out: two in France, one in Belgium, one in Austria and one in Switzerland. Having always worked "on the rope", she fully trusts her fellow workers.

On her second day in Fribourg, Sister Emmanuelle is received by Mr Michel Pittet, State councillor in charge of economy and employment. This time, she asks him for an emergency aid to the refugees in the Darfur camps; convinced by her pressing request, the President of the State council of Fribourg

promises to grant us with a financial support. We are grateful to the three State councillors who have heartily welcomed our sister and her small delegation.

A reception with numerous important people is organized in honour of Sister Emmanuelle at Bernard Genoud's home, the Lord Bishop of Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg. We are very grateful to his Lordship for this nice meeting. A religious ceremony at Saint Nicolas cathedral beautifully concludes these pretty busy days.

Back in Geneva, Sister Emmanuelle is pleased to meet Farinet's Friends again. They came all the way up from the Valais canton to award her with the "Children of the Earth Prize", which will be assigned to the assistance of Sudanese children. We sincerely thank them, and all the people who took part in the organization of the numerous meetings in French-speaking Switzerland.

In our most changing world, people happen to listen carefully to Sister Emmanuelle's message. The essential values she cherishes - Love, Justice and Hope- help us going on our way saying: Yalla, forward ho!

Marie-Claire Ricou

To Sister Emmanuelle's message of love, I would like to add my cordial thanks to all those who worked to make this year of jubilee a success, in particular Ms Marie-Claire Ricou and Fabienne Lebedinsky who devoted their time, energy and organizational ability to this happening: Thank you!

We are selling a film of the meeting with Sister Emmanuelle at the aula of the University of Neuchâtel. Produced by Mima Vision; this film, called "Vivre, à quoi ça sert?", is available for CHF 25.- (inclusive of postage), in DVD and VHS. Please do contact the Association if you are interested.



Some of you may find this letter too long... but a 25 years anniversary is unique event!! You can also note that this end of year is very rich in information and testimonies. Everybody has rolled up his sleeve to celebrate these 25 years of existence... and it looks like 2005 is going to be quite an exciting year!

By the way, all members of the committee join me to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a year that will overwhelm your hearts and spirits with joy and peace. We hope we can keep on relying on your precious support next year, so that all the programs undertaken can continue unabated!

MICHEL BITTAR
President