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de Soeur Emmanuelle

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LETTER TO FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

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Dear Friends,

NEWS FROM SUDAN

After the historic peace agreement signed by the various groups that had taken part in the devastating civil war, John Garang's nomination to the vice-presidency had brought a glimmer of hope to the country. But the recent death in a helicopter crash of this general, who had become the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, has brought about many troubles in the country, as Kamal tells us:

"Serious and violent disturbances have immediately followed the news of Mr John Garang's death. Hundreds of people have died; many of them were innocent people. Cars and properties have been burnt, and the financial losses amount to millions of dollars. Amazingly enough, the riots took place not only in the capital, but also in many Sudanese cities. The government has ordered an investigation. We hope that all this will not entail negative effects on the peace process."

Our programs in Sudan must also face a new problem: the rising cost of living. Sudan has oil reserves and its currency is rising against the Dollar. Life is becoming expensive and our estimated budgets are going to be insufficient.

Program for street children (Homes and Farms)

The school year started in July, as usual, for our 615 children. The schools asked us to pay the fees, which represent more than US\$ 20'000.-. We pay them every month, but the school authorities insist on our paying the whole year.

We have purchased 10 solar stoves coming from Germany. These 700 Watts stoves can be used for any type of cooking, and we hope they will help us to reduce some costs. We are testing them in the farm of Gebel Awlia and if they prove as efficient as we hope, we will buy more of them for our homes and farms.

We thank Caritas Austria for their generous support to this program: they agreed to finance the cost of one hundred orphans for one more year.

Food Project for small children

We have noted that our babies feeding centres, which officially feed some 8230 babies daily, must put in fact with a number of children quite higher than the registered ones.

For example, we have 800 children registered in two of our centres based in the camps of displaced people in Omdurman; but actually there are nearly 1200 children who come and get their daily meal!. We do our best to face this situation... helped by all those who finance this program in part. Our thanks go to Caritas Austria, whose financial help again this year, enables us to feed more than 1000 children...

We also wish to thank the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs (The Delegation to the Humanitarian Action) which granted us more than EURO 92'000.-. This donation ensures the daily meals of approximately 2000 small children and helps us a lot indeed.

Medical program

This program turns out to be very effective for the poorest patients: simply put, it is the only way for them to be properly treated, and they know that our private clinics provide them with the drugs they need and the best care. That is why our medical centres are always full.

We received from the State of Geneva a mostly appreciated donation of Frs. 30'000.-.

Drinking water supply

The Red Crescent has definitively withdrawn from our co-management of the well we had dug in 1997 in the camp of Omdurman. We are waiting for the agreement of the authorities to be able to sell part of the drawn water, which will be transported by donkey-driven carts. That would enable us to decrease the financial burden that this well represents since the withdrawal of our partner.

Vocational training workshop

The French Embassy in Sudan has financed the vocational training centres for children and adults of Wad-El-Bashir in Gabarona (camp of Omdurman) and of Hag Yussif (the farm of our street children program). Its support did not include our administrative expenses and wages, and it lasted for one year. On the 7th of July 2005, Her Excellency the French Ambassador and some members of the Embassy have visited the centres during the awarding ceremony. It has been a merry day for the 900 students who received their certificate, for all our community and the Ambassador as well. In her much appreciated speech, she promised to keep on supporting this program for two more years; she asked Kamal in return to open and manage a training centre in Juba, in the south of Sudan. It is a very generous proposal and its feasibility could be considered and studied. It would be quite new sphere of activity for us, since previously we could not act in the war zone... It is a serious decision, which requires our weighing up the pros and cons, because there are huge problems of logistics, organization and delegation of responsibilities (regarding the financial control for instance).

We take here the opportunity to tell our deep gratitude to the French Government, the French Embassy and Her Excellency the Ambassador.

The program "Now in Masonry" that we are running in Geneina (western part of Darfur) in partnership with Canada War Child, is a great success, according to our Canadian partner.

As for the other centres, the training programs are going on well. There is just one problem: the cost of the materials for the training keeps on increasing, which makes our budget tighter everyday.

In conclusion, Kamal wishes to thank again from the bottom of his heart Sister Emmanuelle and her associations in Europe, as well as all the donators and supporters whose major participation enables us to keep on going on.

And he adds: "The problems we are facing together are serious, but we are sure we can cope with them, because we feel that the Lord is helping us in His own way. We only are His tools."

NEWS FROM HAITI

HERE IS JEAN-CLAUDE'S REPORT:

The Foundation Cosmos has received Jean-Baptiste Chavannes' resignation. Mr Chavannes has been our executive director for one year. There are too many differences between his views and the ones of the other members of the foundation, on the aims and the management of the projects of Haiti-Cosmos in the Central Plateau. We have thus chosen to decentralize the various activities, and each member of the foundation is now in charge of a program: Périclès Beaugé is managing Polytec, André Renard the Centre of Medicinal Plants and Michel-Ange Desrosiers the Cosmos dispensaries.

In June 2005, ten more persons have graduated from our **technical college Polytec**, which brings up to 60 the total number of young people who received a formation in this school. All of them have now a job. The only one who was unemployed until recently, Davilard Lévy, has just set up his own business : he opened a building material store at Hinche. This confirms us in the idea that unemployment in Haiti is rather a lay-off phenomenon. Haitians do not find jobs because they lack training. And the managers cannot develop their companies because they do not find enough skilled labour.

The Centre of Medicinal Plants is becoming a reality. The fence around the land is now built, and we have already planted 6000 plants from 5 different species (aloe, guava, cachiman, tamarind and mango). At the request of professor Hostettmann from the University of Geneva, Mrs Ferrero Menut of the Foundation des Grangettes and Jean Claude Francois prepared a brief description of the project. This text will be used as a starting point by the interdisciplinary team, as they are considering how they can participate in this project in Haiti. However the political situation is so tense in Haiti that there is no question of our sending a team there before the next elections (presidential, parliamentary and local) which should take place in November and December.

The Association Bâtibrique is back on the track. You may remember that between 1998 and 2000 we had trained 40 young masons in clay-construction techniques. Mixed up in the movement Lavallas, these young people had eventually all left the association. Last spring, I have met a score of them who, disappointed by their political experience, have come back and try to re-form the association with the assistance of an engineer, Joseph Presmy. I gave them the equipment that had been used during their formation and also to build the Dispensary at Hinche. This initiative delights us not only because they already got two orders of construction, but also because the price of cement has literally tripled between 2000 and 2005, rising from \$ 2.50 to \$ 7.50.

In short, we are very pleased with the course of our projects in Haiti, in spite of the flaws that may have every member of our staff on the spot. But our greatest satisfaction comes from the total commitment of the Swiss Association of the Friends of Sister Emmanuelle to support our action.

Finally, we inform you that we have already found all the money we needed to implement our budget 2005, thanks to the generosity of the Swiss Association of the Friends of Sister Emmanuelle and other institutions such as the Foundation Coromandie, the Town of Geneva, and the districts of Chêne-Bougeries and Chêne-Bourg. We heartily thank them all !

Jean-Claude François
Vice-president of Haiti-Cosmos

NEWS FROM SISTER EMMANUELLE

MRS MIRLESSE AND MRS RICOU REPORT THE FOLLOWING:



Following the visits of Charlotte Floris, member of our committee, and her friend Viviane from the Belgian Association, and of Lucianna Williamson (also member of our committee) and her husband Eric, we went to visit Sister Emmanuelle in her old people's home in Caillan, located in the South of France.

After having attended the mass together, we conversed with her in her small room overlooking the valley of Caillan.

During our conversation, Sister Emmanuelle told us how deeply distressed she was by all the disasters currently occurring over the world and all the human tragedies that they carry. Still, she wants to keep on watching the news on television to be able to sympathize with people in their grief. She said: "It is good to share the miseries of those stricken, to act through the prayer which leads to Hope, because the Lord is Life and Resurrection"

She added: "Even in the darkest nights there is a way to the Light" for who looks for it.

When we asked her about God's presence at the time of death, she told us: "It seems to me that, at this ultimate moment, something happens between God and man, a kind of final choice, face to face with the Light, with Jesus, who asks to the dying person: -"Do you want Me?" At this moment, any man of goodwill will say: 'Yes Lord, I want you.' "

About violence, Sister Emmanuelle told us how Sister Sara -the nun who succeeded her in the Mokattam, the suburb of Cairo where the rag-pickers are living, attended a dangerous aggression from a 5 years old child on his play-mate, and how, by gentle words and a calm demeanour, she managed to disarm him and lead both of them to reconciliation.

She was briefed about the work of the Association in Sudan and in Haiti, and she was delighted and expressed her deep gratitude to the generous and faithful donors.

We wished we could stay longer with her, but we are happy to have seen her quite alive and radiant.

**Hélène Mirlesse,
Luc and Marie-Claire Ricou**

Finally, we would like to share with you Bol Akuat Athian's story. He is a young Sudanese, a Southerner, who used to live in one of our homes. Brother Michel Fleury, who has worked for a long time with Kamal in Sudan on the vocational training program, and who is now back in France, describes us the life of this young man: a personal life trajectory, but so similar to that of thousands of Sudanese people.

LET ME REMIND YOU THAT SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE PROGRAM IN 1986, SOME 1300 STREET CHILDREN LIKE BOL HAVE BEEN ACCOMODATED, EDUCATED AND LED TO THE POINT WHERE THEY CAN STAND ON THEIR OWN FEET... IS THIS NOT SIMPLY MARVELLOUS?

**MICHEL BITTAR
President**

In Sudan: between hope and fear, the true story of Bol Akuat, former « street children »...

Bol Akuat Athian is a young Southerner who is living in the North of Sudan, in the vicinity of the capital, Khartoum. Bol has always known the war: he was born 22 years ago around Awiel, in the South of Sudan, just when the second civil war was breaking out between the North, where the majority is Arabic and Muslim, and the South, where people are mainly African and Christian or animist.

One day, when he was 10, as he was looking after the small herd of his family, he got captured by slaves traffickers and was taken away in the North, in Babanoussa. There, he was sold and bought several times. Then he managed to flee and arrived in Khartoum. He found there millions of Southerners driven out by the civil war, living in broad shantytowns. He wandered in the streets of Khartoum, far away from his family, harassed by hunger, diseases, and above all the fear of being caught by his former masters.

Until this day when he was picked out by the employees of the St Vincent de Paul Society, the only non-Islamic NGO recognized by the Sudanese Ministry of Social Affairs. He was fed*, looked after** and brought in one of the "homes" for street children created by the association with the moral and financial support of associations of Sister Emmanuelle. He was registered in one of the 90 bamboo schools founded by the Archbishop of Khartoum for the southern children***. He remembered having seen Sister Emmanuelle on her last visit in Sudan, in 1997, and he says: "We all are Sister Emmanuelle's children".



Bol (au milieu), dans la ferme de Bori, en 2002

After his primary school, he was transferred in one of the three farms for the teenagers who used to live in the streets. He continued his studies in a state school close to the farm, and he also learned some agricultural and masonry techniques****, that have enabled him to earn his own living. In 2002, he passes his final school certificate with distinction (78%!).

Then, taking advantage of the cease-fire proclaimed during the peace negotiations, he decided to go back to his village, near Awiel. After 12 years of separation, he could see his mother again, and several brothers and sisters too, but he learned the death of his father, killed while he was fighting against the government army.

Back in Khartoum, he had to undergo two months of military training in the government army, for only those who attend this training can receive their school certificate! Then he went at the university, like 150 former street children who have been accommodated and educated by the St Vincent de Paul Society. He is currently in second year of Business Administration, at the Southern University of Juba.

On the 9th of July 2005, like millions of his fellow Southerners, he went out in the streets to welcome in triumph the leader of the southern rebellion, John Garang, who came in Khartoum to be sworn in as vice-president of the republic. It was the result of the peace agreement, signed in January 2005 after two years of hard negotiations, between the northern government and the rebels from the South. Like all the Southerners, Bol had looked on these long negotiations with scepticism: he knew well that the northern government had never respected any of the agreements it had signed, and that it had always tried to impose its own interests. But the arrival of the southern leader aroused the foolish hope that peace and the end of sufferings were finally there...

Then, on the 31st of July, came these terrible news: John Garang has died in a helicopter crash. Bol did not take part in the riots that followed the announcement of this piece of news (130 people died and thousands of stores have been burnt), but he did not believe that it was just an accident. He became despondent and desperate, and had no more trust whatsoever in his northern neighbours...

Now that John Garang has a successor, Bol begins to feel hopeful again, and he thinks that one day, he will be able to live in his land and help his family. According to the signed agreements, the South of

Sudan will have an independent government during a six years period ; after that, it could choose by referendum either to become independent or to remain in a united Sudan. And of course, like the broad majority, Bol is going to choose independence, for he has suffered too much injustice and segregation.

Thus, like all the Southerners around Khartoum, he lives in the hope of a better life, **BUT FOR WHEN?**

- All the families that Bol knows long to go back to Southern Sudan. But, during his two months stay in his village, he could see that there are no social and economic infrastructure whatsoever over there. People live in the greatest destitution, almost in starvation. And if all the displaced people decided now to return to their villages, it would cause another humanitarian disaster. Moreover, there are plenty of mined areas, and the mine clearance will take many years.
- Of course he does not envy the lot of the people of Darfur (in the West of Sudan), who are also living in camps. All the televisions around the world have reported on their terrible situation. But he notes that almost all the NGOs have left the shantytowns around Khartoum to go to Darfur ; and most of the humanitarian supplies that they used to receive, they can see it now flying above their heads in U.N. freighters... And yet the situation of the Southerners has not improved: they still undergo the same violence, the same destitution, and they are been living in the same inhuman conditions for more than 20 years now! People are always starving, they are still lacking drinking water, and the babies continue to die of malnutrition, dehydration and malaria.
- Bol and his friends have become adults who can stand on their own feet thanks to some associations like the Association of Friends of Sister Emmanuelle. But they do know that many children around them are still undergoing the same sufferings they went through. And they dread that those who helped them become discouraged or give up, thinking that "now that peace came in Sudan, children do not need our assistance any more".

YES, it seems that we finally have peace, Bol Akuat Athian and his pals have been helped out and are facing a promising future in a free South Sudan, where everything is to be done.

But...

NO, the living conditions have not improved yet, and many children still need our assistance to survive*, to be treated**, educated*** and trained****.

Time to give up has not yet come.

* Babies feeding program

** Medical program

*** Rakubas program

**** Vocational training program

Brother Michel Fleury