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## LETTER TO FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

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**Dear Friends,**

### NEWS FROM SUDAN

Kamal reports:

#### Program for street children (Homes and Farms)

Our program for street children is going on well. We presently take full care of 615 children and teenagers who all go to school.

Our social workers and the foster parents of our homes have all attended proficiency courses this year. These courses are given by experts commissioned by the authorities. This all the more enhances our credibility with the authorities, which is a good thing for the smooth running of the program. The training topics were: Career counselling, problems solving techniques, and stress management.

A hundred of our young adults, who are soon to leave our centres, will benefit from this psychic and moral support, and thus face their future with more serenity.

We are presently studying the project of a new farm, made up of three different lodging units, each one vast enough to accommodate a hundred children. We have already bought the land: it is close to the other farm of Gebel Awlia, which facilities can be used for the vocational training courses; this means an appreciable saving as we shall not need to build and equip the buildings for these courses.

The financing for these units has still to be found and is being asked from possible donors. We shall keep you informed about the developments of this project.

#### Food project for small children

Nearly 10 000 children visit our 18 centres to get their daily meal, although "only" 8 230 are officially registered. We do not have the heart to throw out the "gate-crashers"!

Some of these centres are more than 100km far from the city. They all are built in masonry, with very simple local materials.

No doubt that the health of the children is getting better thanks to the food that we give them. We can see their satisfaction after the meal, and the happiness of their mothers. A woman, passing by the market place, was so surprised to see no child searching food in the refuse, that she cried out in her own language: "Thank you my God to have sent us Saint Vincent de Paul to feed these babies"! We report this anecdote to underline how vital this program is for these destitute families. That is why we suggest to all our visitors in Sudan to go and see one of these centres for themselves, so that they can readily visualise with their own eyes how crucial they are for these children.

## Medical program

Our mobile clinics provide medical care to the staff and the pupils of the bamboo schools ("rakubas") of the Archdiocese. In 2005, we treated more than 8000 patients. Many pupils suffer from malaria, bilharziasis, skin disorders, eye diseases, and all kind of other troubles.

The permanent clinics and the Friday mobile ones provide care to the displaced people. We are glad to tell you that, in the future in the camp of Omdurman, our two clinics will be used to look after pregnancies, in co-operation with the maternity hospital of the Sisters. We provided some of the furniture and the equipment required by this new essential service. We shall keep you informed how this addition to our medical program has been received by the female population of the camps.

## Vocational training workshop

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, 307 students from the Mayo region attended their awarding ceremony. We had invited local and international NGOs' officers and government representatives, who were quite impressed. In August, we had already organized a similar ceremony in Wad el Bashir, as we reported it in our previous letter. We hope that the obvious popularity of these public events with the population of the camps will help us to defuse the difficulties we are facing sometimes with the authorities.

We make it a point to try and keep in touch with our graduates to find out whether they find jobs and keep statistics to determine what the most "marketable" careers are. One case among others: it was reported that one of our graduates, who had no trade and had to spend the whole week far away from his family in order to get small jobs here and there, has just got a full-time work!

No doubt that this vocational training program definitely makes it possible for these displaced people to hope in a better future.

## Financial statement

One month ago, we had to face serious financial difficulties. We then sent an urgent message, a kind of S.O.S, to the president of the Association in Geneva, who immediately responded: We are very grateful to him for his quick and helpful reaction. *(Note from the president: This is possible thanks to our financial reserves that we make a point of putting aside, and which are essential to ensure the durability of our programs!).*

## Improvements of our programs

In order to improve our work and our services, we have asked Dr. Wani Tombe Laku, an economist who studied in England, to analyse and assess our programs. This associated professor in rural development at the University of Juba is going to visit most of our centres and give us his report within 3 months. That will help us to make our programs progress and to improve our activities.

Christmas is coming soon, and we take this opportunity to thank you all for your supporting our cause and for your concern for the destitute in Sudan. Without your contribution, we would not have got anywhere.

We thus ask Our Lord to bless you and to reward you all in His own way.



## NEWS FROM HAITI

Jean-Claude François is currently in Haiti for a two months stay. The hurricane season is now over, and the bad weather has caused widespread damage: during nearly three weeks, Hinche has been totally cut off from the rest of the world.

Here is some news that he managed to send us by e-mail:

- Daniele and Leon Meynet from Haiti-Cosmos have come to Hinche, where they are spending two weeks visiting all the projects. They will later on report their observations. To celebrate the 10th anniversary of our school in Hinche, they have organized a very nice party and gave a significant lecture on democracy. More than 200 people attended this celebration.
- Both Andre Renard, head of the centre of medicinal plants, and Michel-Ange Desrosiers, manager of the Cosmos dispensaries, are candidates at the elections to the District Administrative Council of Hinche. As they are spending most of the time campaigning instead of working on our projects, Jean-Claude has finally decided to offer them an unpaid leave.
- Jean-Claude has taken control of the supervision of the whole staff, except for the school, where the employees are well managed by Beauge. There, everyone gets paid and all is well.
- The construction of the Laboratory of medicinal plants has not started yet, because the final plan has been printed only very recently and we are still waiting for an estimate from an engineer.

## NEWS FROM SISTER EMMANUELLE

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, your president went to Paris to attend a meeting with Sister Emmanuelle, the presidents and representatives of the four sisters Associations.

Knowing that Sister Emmanuelle wished to take part in this meeting for sentimental reasons, the French Association and its president Trao N'Guyen put themselves out for her: they organized an accompanied her journey from Caillan to Paris, and made sure that auxiliary nurses would be always available during her stay.

We started at 11 a.m. with a mass celebrated in the chapel of the "Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes", rue de Sèvres. Then followed a one-hour meeting with Sister Emmanuelle in a large room that was lent to us during which she encouraged the four presidents to endeavour to cooperate and meet more often in future. And to achieve this object, she asked us to collaborate on a common project. The four associations, who are already operating in Sudan, decided to set up all together **a project in the South of the country**.

Let me explain. During all the duration of the civil war, we had to choose where we would operate: either in the North, as ASASE did, with the assistance of the French and Austrians, or in the South, like the Belgians. To be present on both sides would be too big a gamble as we would risk being forced to close down our activities by the authorities!... Now that a peace agreement has been signed, we can contemplate setting up a common project: *We shall encourage and try to facilitate the repatriation of the IDPs back to Southern Sudan, whenever the living conditions permit such a move, by providing them the means to do it.*

It was decided to arrange a meeting in Europe between Kamal and the representative of the Belgians in the South, Mgr. Taban. It is too early to say if such a project will be initiated!

This meeting has been constructive and moving. I found Sister Emmanuelle quite frail and getting tired rather quickly; but she was nevertheless as lively, sprightly, clear-sighted as ever, and led the debates with still the same authority! I must acknowledge that this time my heart missed a beat when I left her, considering her old age (she is 97)! However she is still among us, by the heart and through prayer. **We send her our best wishes for the new year, and we press her on our heart, telling her as she used to tell us: YALLAH... Let's move forward...**

**MICHEL BITTAR**  
President