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LETTER TO FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

N°142

CHRISTMAS 2020



*"Forward, poor and naked humanity!
Go in Hope. You have a Savior! »*

Dear Friends,

I hope that this letter finds each of you in good shape in this never-ending period of epidemic...

As far as we are concerned, Jean Claude François, who is in charge of the programs in Haiti, caught Covid in September while he was in Geneva. Being diabetic and having lost 12 kg in about ten days, he caused us much concern; but fortunately, he has now recovered well.

The fourteen days of quarantine imposed on visitors coming from abroad to South Sudan unfortunately prevented me from going in Juba this year.

Despite the return to relative peace, the general situation in the country is not really improving. At the end of September, David Shearer - the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) special representative - said that no progress had been made in unifying the country's warring forces under one army, as promised under the September 2018 peace deal. Troops brought together at joint training sites across the country are deserting because of a lack of food and other essentials. They return to their villages hungry and frustrated, and this does not help create a climate of peace and hope. The scheduled elections were deferred for the third time, to 2022, and Kiir would like to postpone them again to 2023. As reported by Human Rights Watch, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and torture have become commonplace.

Approximately **800,000 people in the central and northeastern states were affected by particularly severe flooding** in recent months.

In August, the deputy governor of the Bank of South Sudan said that the central bank was out of foreign exchanges. The dollar is currently trading at SSP 450 (it was SSP 300 a year ago), sending prices sky-high.

Nevertheless, as usual, the teams of our local partner, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society (SVDP), Juba, continue their efforts to strengthen the resilience of the people of the region.

Following government directives concerning schools, universities and training institutions, **the Lologo Center was finally able to resume training in early October.**

SVDP had to provide masks to all trainees and trainers, in addition to soaps and hydroalcoholic gels.



The trainees of some training courses had to be separated into two groups to meet the number constraints. Official government directives extend the duration of this disrupted session until the end of March. To make up for the lost time, the daily duration of the courses has been extended by one hour and the training courses are also held on Saturdays. Next year's training session will only start at the beginning of April and end at the end of 2021.

As regards to the **poultry unit** (one of the income-generating programs), to reduce prohibitive import costs, SVDP is now taking advantage of the maize harvested this year at the pilot farm. But the supply of concentrates from Uganda is complicated by problems at the borders due to pandemic-related restrictions. Current egg production (more than 400 eggs per day) brings in about \$1300 per month.

As you know, **about 170,000 masks were produced in the Tailoring IGP unit by 75 graduates in Sewing**, under agreements with the United Nations and MSF. **Here is the testimony of one of them, Clara Iboni Lako** (see photo, in the Center):

"I produced about 3000 masks for free distribution to the people. I can say that this opportunity, while helping out the community, has changed my life.

I am 27 years old. When my husband left me, I found myself alone, without work, with our two children. As is often the case here for single mothers who depend on their relatives, I was sometimes scorned and often the scapegoat whenever there was a problem, financial difficulties, etc... Thanks to the training in Sewing that I received at the Lologo Center in 2018, I was able to join the mask production workshop and earn money. It allowed me to improve my small sewing business in my neighborhood (I was able to buy fabric), to do some maintenance and painting in the family home and to buy clothes for my children. The food at home was not good, but now I can provide regular meals for my family. Today I am appreciated and respected by my mother and other members of my family: in these times of economic hardship accentuated by the pandemic, I have shown that I can be a breadwinner for the household.

Thank you to all the donors who are helping us from afar! Merry Christmas with your family! »



In Haiti, while demonstrations and depredations have diminished, there has been a resurgence of assassinations and kidnappings of prominent citizens.

For the moment, it is impossible for Jean Claude to go on site: there are no flights to Haiti and the borders with the Dominican Republic have recently been closed.

In Hinche, the Cosmos Foundation has appointed a new director, Ronel Odatte, who will be able to assist Jean Claude, especially when he is in Geneva.

In spite of the pandemic, all the activities are working, except for the work on the hotel: the plumber, the tilers, the carpenters have increased the prices that had been agreed upon with Jean Claude, certainly because of the 25% inflation.

The high school and baccalaureate exams did not take place in June but in November and the results are still awaited.

The Jean Price Mars University has 55 new graduates in 2020 and 50 new registrants. 30 donors from our Geneva partner Haiti Cosmos have pledged to sponsor scholarships (10 CHF/month for four years).

We wish you a very nice Christmas, celebrated perhaps in a very special way, more intimate and profound, due to the conditions disrupted by the health crisis.

Patrick Bittar
Director