



Association suisse des Amis
de Sœur Emmanuelle

49, route de Sous-Moulin
1226 Thônex
+41 (0)22 348 20 85
info@asase.org
www.asase.org



LETTER TO FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

N°145

SEPTEMBER 2021

"You don't measure poverty on a Richter magnitude scale as you do it for earthquakes!"

Dear Friends,

In Haiti, in mid-August, the earthquake, similar in magnitude to that of 2010, particularly affected four departments in the south of the country.

Jean Claude François, the person in charge of the programs that we support through the Geneva association Haiti Cosmos, was then there, from where he writes us today: "As usual, no notice was given to the population while eight seismic signaling sites have been installed in the country since the 2010 earthquake. The earth shook for 40 seconds across the country and even in neighboring countries."

It is estimated that more than 700,000 people have been directly affected (more than half of them children); nearly 3,000 people have died and 13,000 are missing.

"Thousands of houses collapsed, some of which were inhabited. We have lost schools, churches, hotels and public buildings.



Cultivations are also ravaged. This earthquake caused less casualties than that of 2010 in Port-au-Prince (300,000 dead and one million missing). The reason is that the affected cities are small, far behind the megalopolis of Port-au-Prince (nearly 5 million inhabitants in an area that is twice that of Geneva). Haiti is therefore not equipped to handle such disasters.

Thank God, local and foreign aid was quickly distributed to the survivors.

A Swiss NGO working in the South ordered Diarrix from us in anticipation of a possible cholera epidemic." According to the FAO, nearly a million people are at risk of suffering from hunger this winter. Responding to the needs of disaster victims is a logistical challenge given the insecurity that reigns on the roads.

In fact, while the investigation into the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in early July is trampling on, **the gangs (76 listed) are more than ever imposing their law**. Hundreds of young people with tens of thousands of weapons are rampant in the capital and in the provinces. The stories of the abuses by these gangs are frightening: racketeering, vehicle thefts, kidnappings, looting, bank robberies, assassinations ... In Port-au-Prince, tens of thousands of people had to leave their homes to take refuge in quieter areas, in gymnasiums or with acquaintances.

Jean Claude was actually in the capital in mid-July when Storm Grace caused torrential rains

across the country, adding disaster to misery and insecurity. He was accompanying a driver to bring back to Hinche - where the programs are located, in the center-east of the country - the container blocked for more than a year in the capital. They arrived in Hinche without incident. *"We put everything under lock and key, while waiting to redistribute the articles between the different sectors."*

Last month, a group of young people broke into JPM University and took away a generator that we bought last year for \$ 6,000. The two unarmed night guards attempted to intervene when the thieves fired several shots in their direction. They quickly took shelter and let the thieves go with their loot.

I don't go out alone. The students come to pick me up for class. I receive people at home for the other programs. In a month and a half of staying in Hinche, there was 3 hours of electricity. The internet is only working every now and then."

Despite this appalling context, **Hinche was not too shaken by the earthquake, and our activities, which employ a staff of around 150 people, continue to function normally there:** the microcredit scheme, the Bethesda high school, the Jean Price Mars university, the technical school, the medicinal plants laboratory and the dispensaries.

"One of our actions in the Central Plateau of Haiti consists in showing another path to the youth, by offering them almost free and short-term trainings, such as: sewing, cosmetology, ceramics, masonry, plumbing, electricity, cabinetry and agriculture. We have registered a strong demand for cosmetology and ceramics. This is not the case with agriculture. The reason is that this sector does not receive any framework from the public authorities. In addition, farmers are too often attacked by bandits who come to steal their crops."

We thank the University of Geneva, the Grangettes Foundation and Mrs Françoise Aebi for their support, as well as ASASE and the Coromandel Foundation who are funding our activities. "

I admire the courage and dedication of our local partners in Haiti and South Sudan.

As I write these lines, I learn that a 70-year-old priest was shot dead, by a gang, in the middle of the street in northern Haiti and this tragedy (sadly one example among many others) reminds me of the murder of two sisters three weeks before, in South Sudan. The sisters, who have provided education and health services to the poorest in Juba for years, were on the Nimule road (that connects the capital to Uganda) when their bus was attacked by unidentified gunmen.

Now Betram, the programs director of our local partner - the Saint-Vincent-de Paul Society, Juba (SVDP) – has gone recently

to Uganda to collect material for the trainings. On his way back, the SVDP truck broke down on this particularly insecure Nimule road. Betram had to spend two nights on the road, waiting for spare parts.



Betram Gordon Kuol



Jean Claude François

In mid-October, if the health and safety conditions do not unfavorably evolve, I will travel to Juba for two weeks to follow up the progress of our projects and to remind the local teams that despite the distance, we are by their side. And this "we" obviously includes you, dear Friends.

By the way, we had excellent news at the end of July of the continued support from the State of Geneva over the period 2021-2023. We are extremely grateful to the State Council and the Service de la Solidarité Internationale's team for their reiterated trust. The Canton's contribution to the Lologo Vocational Training and Community Development Center has been decisive for 12 years and remains essential to allow SVDP to meet the still enormous needs of the region.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Bittar'.

Thank you in advance, dear Friends, for your donations that make it possible to continue our actions in these chaotic environments.

**Patrick Bittar
Director**