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## LETTER TO FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

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*« The irruption of love into an existence is like fire that suddenly bursts into the hearth: its light enhances everything and the whole house can be set on fire. Love is the mystery of our life. »*

Dear Friends,

**I returned at the beginning of November from my annual visit to Juba in South Sudan.**

Beyond the evaluation of the progress of the projects that we finance thanks to you, working sessions with the teams of our local partner, the Saint-Vincent-de-Paul Society (SVDP), Juba, and meetings of a few beneficiaries, these visits lead to often poignant confrontation with harsh individual realities.

For example, when **I visited Santo Taamoun, 19 years old, a former member of our Be In Hope (BIH) street children program...** Having reached the age limit set by the rules of the BIH home, Santo joined his family at the beginning of the year. The BIH alumni sponsorship program of SVDP allows him to continue his secondary studies without having to pay his tuition fees.

He lives with his mother, his grandmother, his disabled little brother and his three sisters in a slum in Juba. Thousands of poor people (not particularly displaced people) are squatting on the land of an old cemetery. I have already visited displacement camps in Juba, but finding there a young person whom I knew a little<sup>1</sup> made the experience much more upsetting.

I met again this gentle, clever (he always had good school results) and curious boy (it was at his request that we created a library in the home) in his miserable environment.

Courageous, he sells sweets in the camp and complains about nothing. When I asked him how he managed to do his homework, he told me it was not easy without electricity. I also learned incidentally that the "roof" of his cabin (on the left in the photo) was not very waterproof... I invited him to come and meet his former comrades during my visit to the home on the following Sunday. He was happy to participate in the traditional football match.

I then gave him a solar flashlight, a plastic sheet, some cash and books...



<sup>1</sup> I had interviewed him two years before. Watch our video: [https://youtu.be/c06\\_\\_vKZ7Rg?si=oAQ0EjzeDg7B3K2a](https://youtu.be/c06__vKZ7Rg?si=oAQ0EjzeDg7B3K2a)

### **SVDP is engaged simultaneously on four construction projects:**

- the new two-story workshop for Refrigeration training in Lologo (photo below);
- the large two-story building for the primary school in Lologo, which is almost complete (next year, the number of students per class will therefore be lower);
- the new poultry center (an income-generating program) at Nyarjwa farm;
- the community hall in the village of Nyarjwa (responding to the request of the local community).

All construction works are progressing according to schedule, even if it is not easy to keep budgets given the constant rise in material prices.

The South Sudanese pound continues tumbling and it now takes 1000 SSP (compared to 650 in January) for 1\$. Since July, SVDP salaries are paid in \$, in accordance with new local guidelines.

I stayed in the guest house with **Christophe Berger, from Pharmacists Without Borders Switzerland, our partner on the Health Center in Nyarjwa.**

Christophe was able to see the good functioning of the Center since its renovation last year and the increase in its attendance due to the new tarmac road coming from Juba.

**I visited the Don Bosco Center in Juba, managed by the congregation of the Salesians.**

On a huge 100ha plot of land, the center is home to many activities, but I particularly wanted to see their **vocational training center**, the only one, along with that of SVDP, that stands out in the region.

Providing 3-year (the last year of which includes 6 months of internship) fee-paying training courses (\$200 per year, an unaffordable price for most people) to men for 80% (compared to 55% for SVDP) and with more than a quarter of trainees in IT training (compared to less than 10%), this Center is not targeting the same population as that of SVDP.

We met one of the two employees of their Job Center office in charge of helping graduates enter the labor market, and we learned some very useful lessons for our own program.

**I met the 7 income-generating programs new sales manager.**

He has many challenges to overcome, particularly in the poultry program, by initiating branding (especially packaging) of eggs and chickens to differentiate these local products from the competition of imported ones.

The jams produced in the production unit inaugurated this year are already sold in labelled glass jars. The deposit system works well.

I visited the farm where I could see the last corn plantation which was benefiting from the late rains. These will perhaps make it possible to compensate somewhat for the mediocrity of previous harvests which suffered from unusually low rainfall. Fortunately, this has not impacted the cultivation of fruit trees (banana trees, papaya trees) planted in the clayey soil of the land: their fruits are abundant.

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**In Haiti, the projects of our local partner in Hinche are now suffering from the endemic insecurity that reigns in the country.**

This particularly concerns the Education projects of our local partner's action: the number of students registered in our schools and the university has fallen this year. This phenomenon, due to massive emigration, is affecting all educational establishments in the country, with 50 to 75% drops of numbers since three years in some universities, and closures for many others.

However, it is important to remain hopeful and support our partner during this difficult time!

Our warmest thanks in advance for your donation, and I wish you a very nice Christmas!

**Patrick Bittar**  
Director

