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LETTER TO FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

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« *In patience there is suffering. But suffering patiently endured has a very purifying value (...) Patience is the overcoming of despair, the beginning of consolation.* »

Dear Friends,

In Haiti, gang violence has left more than a million people homeless in recent years.

Gangs control 85% of the capital. They could prevent any participation in the first round of the general elections next November, undermining the legitimacy of the future government. Their leaders could also attempt to steer votes toward candidates favorable to them, or even form their own party, as suggested by one of the leaders of a coalition of gangs that joined forces last year to impose themselves in the capital.

In Hinche, where the programs we support are located, the security situation is less catastrophic but remains tense: gangs sometimes operate at night, firing into the air in certain neighborhoods to signal their presence and committing burglaries.

Nevertheless, our local partner's teams continue their work to assist the population.

Here is the testimony of Ironel Derilus, one of the many beneficiaries of the actions carried out by our local partner in the educational field.

"I'm 43 years old. I was born in Marmont, a village 6km south of Hinche, into a very modest rural family with seven children.

After passing the baccalaureate in 2007, attending university in Haiti was not easy given the economic constraints. At the time, university studies required a lot of money to cover tuition, housing, food, and other expenses.

Thanks to a scholarship from the École Polytechnique du Centre (Polytec), I was able to study there and get a diploma in accounting in 2009.

After the January 2010 earthquake and the subsequent creation of the Université Jean Price Mars (UJPM) in Hinche, I was fortunate enough to continue my studies with a scholarship from UJPM and get a bachelor's degree in Business Management.

Less than a month after graduating in September 2015, I was hired by the Sogebank Group, the country's third-largest commercial bank, as a senior teller.

Today, I work in Hinche as the director of Sogexpress, a subsidiary of the Sogebank Group for the past seven years.



I was able to continue my studies alongside and earn an MBA in Administration in 2023 from the University of Notre Dame d'Haiti in partnership with the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico (IAU). I plan to continue my studies up to the doctoral level. For the moment, there are constraints, but nothing is impossible given my ardent desire to do so.

I am married and the father of two boys.

I would like to thank Dr. Jean Claude François, who not only had the great idea of founding training centers for Haitian youth, but who also allowed me to be a scholarship recipient at these prestigious institutions. Today, if I earn my living, it is thanks to you, Dr. Jean Claude, and to all those who have contributed in one way or another to my education. Thank you to your teams in Geneva: it is through you that I am who I am today.

Nearly 260 meals are distributed daily to primary and secondary school students (see photo) with the support of the American NGO Food for the Poor (which provides the food).

22 of the **dispensaries** scattered across the Central Plateau are operating while undergoing maintenance (budget: CHF 27,000).



Among the health auxiliaries in charge of these clinics, 12 are nurses who passed the state exam after graduating from Jean Price Mars University (UJPM).

A medical assistant supervises the clinics, visiting two per week. His hiring was secured thanks to a pediatrician who completed his master's degree in Cuba and is a professor at UJPM. This pediatrician has recently been appointed Regional Director of Public Health.

8 other clinics are closed and must be rebuilt after being attacked by bandits (who stole the doors, metal sheets, etc.).

It is then planned to either dig up or clean 13 manual wells which supply the dispensaries with drinking water (budget: CHF 17,700).

Demand for phytosanitary drugs produced by the laboratory is increasing, as medicines have become scarce in the country: customs have increased taxes by 100%, and the Dominican Republic has closed its borders as a measure to protect against gang invasion.

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In South Sudan, the graduation ceremony for the 2024 training session has just been held. 538 trainees (34% of whom were women) graduated, and 314 received a tool kit.

Unfortunately, the peace that has prevailed for six and a half years is under threat. In early March, the *White Army*, a Nuer militia linked to Riek Machar, a former rebel leader and now first vice president, took control of a military base in a town in the northeast of Upper Nile State. UN attempts to rescue a Dinka general by helicopter resulted in his death and that of others.

Tensions ran high for several days in Juba. The army surrounded Machar's home, placing him under house arrest. Several of Machar's key allies were arrested.

Ugandan troops were called in to secure the capital.

We thank you in advance for your support for the people of these two countries, who have been tragically exposed to insecurity and poverty for so many generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Bittar', is written over a white background.

We wish each and every one of you an Easter full of Joy and Hope.

Patrick Bittar
Director