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LETTER TO FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

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« If you have loved, if you have shared, if you have desired the happiness of others, you have performed acts of love that will never die. »

Dear Friends,

On June 10, Kamal Tadros passed away in Australia, where he had been living for fifteen years with his daughter and grandchildren. He was 91 years old.

Kamal had served as **the National Secretary of the Saint-Vincent-de-Paul Society (SVDP) in Sudan** and was the driving force behind the programs that ASASE supported in Khartoum and the surrounding area for nearly thirty years.

Alongside Sister Emmanuelle and Michel Bittar, he was one of the pillars upon which these programs were built, operating in a hostile environment at the height of a protracted civil war.

Having had the good fortune to know him from a very young age - he had become a family friend - and later to collaborate with him, **I am well aware of just how much the success of our current initiatives in South Sudan owes to him.**



The story of Kamal's involvement with us began forty years ago, when Sister Emmanuelle traveled to Khartoum at the request of Michel Bittar to assess the situation of displaced populations and determine how to help them.

In the documentary I made in 2005¹, Kamal recounted: *After choosing to resign from Shell Oil Company, I had opened an auto-parts shop with my brother-in-law. I had already been involved with SVDP for years. One day, while I was at the shop, Sister Emmanuelle - whom I had never heard of - walked in and asked me: « Are you interested in the plight of street children? » - What do you mean by "interested"? - I mean: leaving this business, coming with me, and setting up an organization to look after young children. » I said, « All right. » I accepted her proposal immediately, without going into any details.*

That is how, in 1986, the first home for orphans was opened, housing boys whom Kamal had taken in from

¹ « Children of the Nile – 1st part » : <https://vimeo.com/17411134>

the streets.

Over the course of 28 years, more than 10,000 children (including girls) were taken in by foster families. Kamal then gradually established a program (partly supported by ASASE) of reed schools that educated up to 70,000 students, providing them with a daily meal and water.

"But the Islamist authorities soon caused us trouble: they destroyed more than thirty of them, arrested teachers..."

In 1994, Kamal was imprisoned for fifteen days under very harsh conditions. It was thanks to Sister Emmanuelle's intervention with the country's authorities that he was finally released.

This man - tender-hearted yet iron-willed - created and developed numerous other programs alongside his teams in Khartoum and with our support from Geneva: vocational training (training up to 2,000 adults annually over a 20-year period), child nutrition (serving 6,000 children a year for 12 years), clinics, aid for imprisoned women, clean water supplies, and more.

Before becoming the director of SVDP Juba—our local partner in South Sudan—Betram Gordon Kuol worked alongside Kamal for several years at SVDP Khartoum.

He often says that it was Kamal's example that inspired his unwavering commitment to his most destitute compatriots.

Here is an excerpt from the moving tribute he wrote upon learning of his mentor's passing:

« Kamal lived what few of us only speak: compassion without conditions, love without limits, kindness without agenda, and faith without doubt.

He denied himself so others could be lifted up.

Through his selfless service, he raised a generation of vulnerable youth and gave hope to forgotten communities in Sudan and South Sudan.

Though our hearts are heavy today, we are richer because he walked among us, and his work lives in all of us.

Kamal didn't just serve the poor, he became family to them (...)

In a world that chases for itself, he chose self-denial and gave his entire life to those who had nothing. Because of him, children who were forgotten found dignity, and communities that were broken found hope (...) He combined what the world needs most: compassion that sees, love that stays, kindness that heals, and faith that holds. He spent his life emptying himself so others could be filled with food, with education, with hope, with God.

The youth he raised and the communities he served are his living legacy across Sudan and South Sudan. Today, we grieve the man, but we celebrate a life that proved one person, devoted to others, can change a generation. »



September 5, commemorative celebrations in Juba: Betram, center, with to his right Peter Tadros and William Akech (wearing sunglasses)

Two memorial masses (in June and September) were celebrated at Juba Cathedral, drawing hundreds of people - wearing T-shirts bearing his image! - who had worked with him or benefited from his help.

Among them was William Akech, a former beneficiary of the SVDP Khartoum street children program

who went on to become the director of the equivalent program at SVDP Juba.

Also present was Kamal's nephew, Peter Tadros, who served as president of SVDP Khartoum until the civil war broke out in 2023: his family sought refuge in Cairo while he came to Juba to open an obstetrics clinic.

Patrick Bittar
Director