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LETTER TO FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

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*"And if one can take you what you have,
who can take you what you give?"
(Antoine de Saint-Exupéry)*

Dear friends,

In September, I was in Juba with a member of our Executive Committee, Lucienne Bittar, and two members of our French partner Operation Orange: Patrick Cuinet, President, and Jean Roussineau, member of the Relais Anjou. For all three of them, it was their first time in South Sudan.

Here is Lucienne's testimony :

"I wanted to go to South Sudan to get a better idea of the programs. I have been impressed with the quality of projects and shocked by the country conditions. I did not realize how much a country that has undergone war for two generations offers a particularly bleak landscape..."

The arrival at Juba airport, which was under construction, immediately set the tone. Lined up on the track: a series of helicopters for humanitarian aid. We find ourselves, under a blazing sun, in a real shambles to recover the luggage and complete customs formalities. Betram, the project coordinator of our local partner, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) Juba, is here. With him, everything accelerates. All his qualities glimpsed at this moment - efficiency, patience, kindness and knowledge of the way things work on the ground - will then be confirmed throughout the stay.

Then it's the chaotic track to the guest house of the Lologo Vocational Training Center. All pupils, trainees and employees, not to mention the leaders of the Lologo community, are waiting at the entrance, singing and dancing for us. The emotion is great. This fantastic welcome makes me instantly understand how precious our help is to them.

In this young state where everything is to be done, the success of the SVDP programs shows to the residents of the Lologo slum that they can build a future.



Part of the Lologo Center team, with Lucienne Bittar, Patrick Cuinet and Patrick Bittar

We spend the next three days visiting the achievements. Farm, children's home, babies feeding, health center, everywhere the results seem solid to me despite the many difficulties. Above all, I feel that these projects mean a lot to the beneficiaries and to those who are working on them. As its name suggests it, the Lologo Vocational Training and Community Development Center is more than just a vocational training center. During the day, one can hear the cry of the schoolchildren and the roll of the working workshops machinery. And at the end of the afternoon, families and young people meet there. During our stay, the community was preparing for St. Vincent de Paul's day, and choirs were rehearsing.

But the days go by and the circle of visits is extending... Little by little, reality reveals itself. Soldiers are everywhere, people are worn out by war, misery and mistrust. We visit the public hospital in Juba. It is a shock. It is more like a field hospital... where courageous and involved doctors are doing their best. Despondency overtakes me. There is so much to do! Maintaining the smooth running of programs supported by ASASE, this oasis in a sea of needs, requires so much effort! As if they sensed this discouragement, beneficiaries will tell me, the day of my departure: "Do not forget us."

As a happy coincidence, the return to Geneva is also the time of the commemoration of the ten years of Sister Emmanuelle's death. After Mass at St. Paul's Parish, an actress recites excerpts of texts written by our dear founder. This one seems to be chosen for me: "I do not fight for the mass but for the individuals!"

South Sudanese are resilient. They know how to seize the opportunities available to them. Despite all the boulders placed in their way, our local partners do not give up. They just ask us to do the same."

My visit report, downloadable from the asase.org homepage, will give you detailed information.

I will only tell you that, overall, the news is positive: this time, everyone believes in the effective return of peace, the SVDP development programs are working well, and I have seen **the implementation of the planned improvements.**

The difficulties mainly concern two Income Generating Programs: the poultry program and the pilot farm.

For the latter, the irrigation plan must be completely revised, following the observation of the insufficiency of the quantity of water under the Nyarjwa land, contrary to the data provided by the geophysical survey that had been conducted four years ago by the drilling company.

An alternative solution is under consideration, based on pumping the water from a nearby river.

The presence on the spot of Jean Roussinot, a retired agricultural engineer, was very beneficial to evaluate the situation and to discuss with Betram and the farm managers a new plan for this project, which remains, in the unanimous opinion, important for the future of SVDP Juba.

We thank all those who came to the events we organized in October: the commemoration, mentioned by Lucienne, of the ten years of Sister Emmanuelle's death, and the support evening at the Métropole hotel, where we could present our association and its actions to about eighty people who did not know them.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that **we have reached the goal of our crowdfunding campaign:** thanks to Annabelle de Cazanove's efforts and your generosity, we raised 7000 € for the purchase of tool kits for graduate trainees this year!



Patrick Bittar
Director

To all, we wish a beautiful and sweet Christmas,