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Dear Sponsors

I wish you from the bottom of my heart a very Happy New Year; wish you will stay healthy and your days will be full of sunshine and lights and nights full of happy dreams; in short, a blessed, harmonious and most of all a peaceful year.

Here in Abidjan the year 2019 started with immense sadness. Sylvie, our former employee, whom we nursed for the last ten years in our hospital, passed away on the early morning of 4 o'clock of the New Year's Eve. Whole of her body was paralysed from some illness, so that she couldn't even speak. We all tried to make her world, which consisted of staring at the roof from her bed, a bit bearable through visiting her, as well as by putting the radio on for her, reading books to her and trying to understand what she wanted to say without being able to speak. All these made her smile, which she was able to despite her paralysis - just like as in the past she, as a nanny, brought smiles to our orphaned kids. On 31st December I sat beside her bed for a long time and read from her favourite book. The book was written by a lady, who was also ill just like Sylvie; who instead of questioning angrily the reasons for her fate, just like Sylvie, expressed her feelings through wonderful stories.

I was so fascinated by one sentence, that I read it twice - "I am approaching YOU - YOU on whom I put my whole trust, YOU, to whom I give my wholehearted love". I contemplated, looked at Sylvie and asked her excitedly "Sylvie, do you have Peace and Happiness in your heart?" "Yes" she winked and gave me a smile. "Are you not afraid?" "No" she said with her eyes and again this smile. I realized that after all these years she was ready to go. This also because her daughter Carol, whom we looked after in the last few years, has in the meantime become 20 and is able to look after her own. I stayed with her till the dinner was served; said goodbye to all the 4 patients in the room and said to them "I wish all of you a good night. I shall come early morning to wish all of you a Happy New Year". The mood was calm and peaceful.



Sylvie with her daughter Carol at the time of our Moving-in to Bassam in December 2016

At the entrance I met Carol, who came to give food to her mother. To the nurse on duty I told that like every New Year's Eve I shall switch off my telephone, so that all the SMS-well wishes after midnight will not wake me up. Sylvie choose exactly this night to go. I would have liked to be with her at that moment; but I also realise that she didn't want me to see her die. But it was good that the nurse on duty was with her. I am always fascinated to see how the dying-process functions in that the dying person choose in whose presence he/she wants to die or die exactly in the moment, when he/she is left alone for a short time. On 1st of January 2019 I saw Sylvie for the last time and was overwhelmed to see how beautiful she was. Up to the time of her death there was this smile and this special glow in her face. I am absolutely sure that she found her peace with HIM, whom she didn't blame even once during her long illness for all the sufferings she had to go through. Thanks Sylvie; You made our lives richer.

Christmas 2018

Seven days before that, on 24th December, we had a nice, blessed Christmas party with the children. Together with our carpenter Aziz built a stable and a crib in the garden; some of our kids and employees prepared a nativity play, which was presented with enormous enthusiasm and pleasure. All the blessings and peace dominated over our orphanage, where a new-born baby personified Jesus. At night we lit a fire, grilled raw peanuts and marshmallows, which our daughter Sarah brought from London. We sang and talked about African wisdoms. The peace, which surrounded us reminded me of the atmosphere in a small African village. We were a group of very satisfied people consisting of - patients, employees, kids - enjoying the sound of the cracking fire

As usual the next day the Father Christmas came to us, although with some delay, but that didn't matter. For those, who still believed in him the joy was enormous. Of course, there was a lot and a lot of good food. At least to us the world seemed to be so peaceful.



Our older children didn't want any presents this year; they told me that they had everything they needed; a roof on the head, a bed, enough to eat, the opportunity to go to school, medicines and our love; but they had a wish. They wished that the poorest families of Odoss, the slum behind our centre, should be made happy. We brought the people, who usually went to bed hungry, Christmas meal and their happiness multiplied when we informed them that from then on, they will always have enough food, as we will always supply them with food. More details follow in my next Newsletter.



A day full of Gratitude - for those who are fortunate to be in a position to give and those who are able to accept it with dignity.



20th Year of Centre of Hope

On 1st February our centre celebrated its 20th anniversary. On the following Saturday we celebrated all day long exuberantly with our staff and the young ones, all having excellent mood, happiness and laugh.

We were more than 80 people - many of whom have been with us in the past 15 years. The babies of those days are grown-up now; we are so glad to see them. These are our children, who wouldn't have survived without our help. They literally make us realise that you reap what you sow. You always need to offer time and have patience. When you sow love, you get it back; if you sow hope you will reap it back. The Centre, the children have grown bigger and we all got older; in spite of all the efforts required we are all convinced that it was worth it. We felt that in our heart and saw in the eyes of the people, who joined us in the celebration. They make us convinced that the decision we took years ago was the only right one. However, this project would have ended soon if you hadn't always brought your support, dear sponsors. Thanks to you that this project is still alive. I thank you from the bottom of my heart and greet you heartily!

Yours
Lotti Latrous