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Dear Sponsors

Please allow me to wish you a Happy New Year; a year with good health, filled with light and good luck and all your undertakings ending up in success. I apologise that this Newsletter comes to you with delay. I had a very eventful time and didn't get any time to write to you. First it was Christmas time, which I spent in Switzerland with my family and our young granddaughter Lea. Just before that my book "What was, What is, What counts" appeared, which I wrote about my somehow irregular life. My own book – how many times did I wonder if it would ever end up being a reality? In January I was on a reading tour with my publisher, which took us to eight Swiss cities. So, it was like a round-trip through beautiful Switzerland. To be quite honest: at the beginning I didn't want to participate, as I was scared of so much luxury – but looking back I must confess that I never met so many friendly, caring people and that I had an excellent time. This trip was really relaxing and allowed me to fully recharge my batteries. Someone once told me: "Before you can rescue someone from drowning, you must be able to swim yourself". So, you have to look after yourself.

Now I have been back at Bassam for two days. "At Home". Again and again, during my absence, I realise how much I miss this place; this place with its joys and sufferings, with its pains and happiness, with its tears and laughter. It is a real joy to see how everything here blooms and grows: the Banana, Mango, Papaya and Passion Fruit trees; the wonderful flowers and shrubs; Paradise Flowers, the Roses. And even the Orchids, which we received, feel at home here.





Birthday celebration in February



Jacky and Davila

Then the children: I was away for two months, during which they have grown just like the plants: no wonder – getting so much love and attention. Their school reports were also there – and as it is all over the place – some good grades and some bad, which is normal. But more important is: everyone is in good health, although most of them came here in fast dying condition. We were allowed to rescue them and give them hope for the future in spite of their illness. We have two new kids. Jacky, a six years old girl and Jordan, a lively boy of four. At the time of her coming here Jacky was very ill: Aids, Tuberculosis. No one ever saw her smiling. Today she is out of danger and eats for four; you can easily think that she has to make up for all those years of hunger. Presently we have 42 children in the orphanage; the youngest one is Little-Ruth, six months old, and the oldest is Youssouf, 24. What a joy, to see the kids again – so happy and active, full of life. Even our little Davila, who is only six but already had few strokes and is paralysed on one side. I love these kids so much; they all carry such a heavy legacy on their shoulders – the illness of their mothers, HIV Aids.

It was a pleasure to meet all of our eighty employees again. Everyone is feeling well. They got a pay rise and are grateful that thanks to their job they can manage their lives well. It is a simple life but a respectful one. We keep showing them our gratitude for the work they do for us. Without them we would be completely lost.

In the hospice, which I usually visit last after my return, I also found some patients, whom I said goodbye to before my departure ten weeks ago. Some others were allowed to go home and many died and went to the place where they found peace and quietness. I would like to introduce to you one patient, who hopefully will stay with us long.

Monsieur Gozé

He is Monsieur Gozé and is 37 years old. Four years ago his mother, who was 60 years old at the time, brought him to us in a very bad condition. He had pulled his feet and legs rigidly against his body, one hand bent wide and the other hanging limply on his body. The mother told us his story.

Monsieur Gozé was born being slightly disabled; he dragged one leg behind and one hand didn't follow him. After primary school, he started producing shampoos and soaps, which he could sell to the hairdressing salons. He lived with his mother in a small hut in the slum of Adjouffou. One early morning, it was still dark, he was on his way as usual, when he was attacked by a gang of children, who were not more than ten or twelve years old at that time. These gangs spread terror in the neighbourhood – even the police are afraid of them. All these children are on drugs and not only want to steal but are bloodthirsty and they kill. They are called microbes here.



Our little ones



Monsieur Gozé

Monsieur Gozé was stabbed several times into the spine with a knife and his right buttock was severed with a machete. Then he was struck in his head several times with a big branch and he was left lying there. Dead. They thought. But he was not dead. The people of the neighbourhood dragged the unconscious man to the hospital, where he was treated for a few days, and then he had to leave as they had no money to pay the bills. In this condition his mother brought him to us, she knew us because she had been receiving treatment from us for a long time. Monsieur Gozé has been with us for the last four years, lying in his bed. He can't do anything himself, neither eating nor anything else. Often he is very aggressive towards the nurses and now and then you can hear him shouting like a wounded animal. We know that this is not due to his bodily pain but an emotional one. We bought him a radio and everyday someone takes him out in his wheelchair in front of the television or in the garden, where he can watch the kids playing.

As he can't go to the church, I bring the church to him every Sunday. He loves to listen when we read the Bible to him, most of all he likes to sing. One day I brought with me a small speaker and played the song "You raise me up", and then we all sang together. I noticed that he has a nice voice. Since then he wants to sing that song again and again and he now knows the English words by heart. Every time I look at his face his eyes glow and I know how happy he is at that moment.

And something else makes him happy: when we buy him his beloved palm wine and give him one or two glasses to drink. Palm wine is a local drink and has similar alcohol content as beer.

Then he lies there in his bed having the wine on his bedside table and sings. And every time I am thankful for this wonderful gift, which enables us to provide few people on the earth their dignity and a bit of happiness. It is their happiness that rubs off on us and makes us so grateful.



These endless thanks also go to you, dear Sponsors, again and again, day after day. I wish you with all my heart the same joy as I carry within me!

Yours affectionately

Lotti Latrous

PS:

Today, as I am writing to you, Adjouffou is being demolished. The bulldozers came early in the morning accompanied by the army. Many tears flow, a lot of crying and screaming can be heard. 500'000 people are losing their little possessions – few clothes, few pans, few plastic buckets. But most of all the humble roof over their heads. And they don't know where to go. One thing remains: The faith. No one can steal or destroy that. This faith provides them enough strength to start all over again, to get up again, to hope again. To carry on.