

Stiftung Lotti Latrous
Rämistrasse 5
CH 8001 Zürich

Telefon +41 43 243 67 48
info@lottilatrous.ch

www.lottilatrous.ch

Grand-Bassam, June 2020

Dear Sponsors

Once again, I have the pleasure of talking to you. This time I am in quarantine with our 42 orphans, 6 patients and 20 staff members, and this for more than two months. We are doing well, Covid 19 has spared us so far, and I hope so you and your dear ones as well!

But let's start from the beginning. Aziz and I flew to Bassam on 27 January, where we found Marie-Odile, who stayed with us for another two weeks, and our extended family both healthy and fit. As more and more reports came in that the virus did not stop at the African continent either, I advised Aziz to travel back to Switzerland. It was too risky for me to know him here, because firstly he is 73 years old and secondly, he has a pre-existing lung disease. He was well received in Switzerland.

We in Bassam did what we could to protect everyone in our centres. I bought a few thousand face masks, as well as the same quantity of gloves, and PPE to protect my staff, knowing that the help of the state would be delayed. I was lucky, because ten days later there was no more of it in the whole of Abidjan.

Shortly afterwards, schools closed and a night curfew was imposed, and all the elderly and those with chronic illnesses were quarantined at home. Our children and several employees are also chronically ill so, I was looked for staff who agreed to stay in quarantine with us at the orphanage. And I was successful here too: everyone was of good will and told me that they could stay for at least three months. I also had to get all the AIDS therapies for our children for the next three months and have emergency reserves made. It took three days, then everything was on track.

The next step was to organise the outpatient clinic, because our AIDS patients still had to come to the check-up and needed the essential medication. We also have patients with diabetes, high blood pressure etc. All these people were not to be excluded after all - only because of fear of the virus. We also took care of our social cases: Hundreds of HIV-positive mothers and their children, who without our financial help do not know how to pay the rent and their food. In the crisis, this was all the more of a problem because food prices had tripled in a flash. It hits - as always - the poorest people hardest.

At the end of my whole organisation, I organized a private transport for our employees, because I didn't want to expose them to any danger in the public buses, which were always absolutely overcrowded. That also worked out very well.

Yes, we have taken all possible security measures, we have created separate entrances and exits and have provided soap, water and disinfectant. Our guard makes sure that there is enough distance between the patients; with his measuring stick he waves around - very successfully by the way - in the air. Furthermore, everyone has to wear a mask, which we had made by local tailors. Both employees and patients are very grateful that so much consideration is given to them. What is the most normal thing in European terms is very rarely taken into account over here. The nursing staff of the public hospitals worked for over a month without protective material. And now the material comes only irregularly and there is not enough for everyone.



Our staff is professionally equipped

Since the closure of the school, the children have been receiving lessons from our pedagogue Valérie, who has put together a great programme. Besides learning, they also help out: The children help the staff, be it in the kitchen, the laundry or in the garden, they clean, and the older ones help the nannies. But there is also sport and culture. They do handicrafts, organise events, and I often hear the children laughing and cheering. Their world is in order, they are surrounded by security and love.

But now I would finally like to tell you about my heart's project - our village "Village AYOBÂ L'Espoir", which can be roughly translated as "Good Day Hope". In September 2019, we were lucky enough to acquire a piece of land of around 2,500 square metres with dozens of old palm trees, which borders directly on our Centre. Until then, it was the waste pit of the neighbourhood. We explained to our neighbours that we wanted to do something good. And to all those who had their small businesses on the edge of the rubbish pit, we promised that they would not have to move away, but that we would create space so that they could continue their sales. The first thing we did was to create a new footpath leading to the Odoss slum, which is just behind our centre, because the old one led over the waste pit.

We built the new village primarily for old people who suffer from chronic diseases. Diabetes, for example, if not treated, can lead to blindness and/or amputation of limbs, so it is important that these people get comprehensive help. But we also want to take in disabled and paralysed people in the village, and children who were born with a severe disability. They have it particularly hard in Africa. How difficult is shown by the fact that their mothers are considered witches. There are countless of such people who have to live in undignified circumstances; they usually only get help from neighbours who usually have nothing themselves. We will open our new - intergenerational - project, in which disabled and/or sick people get more than a roof over their heads, as soon as the Corona crisis is over.

I owe the fact that my heart's desire could become reality to all the workers who have already built our Centre in Bassam. And of course Aziz, who with his great experience has once again taken over the construction management. It was a great pleasure to watch how everything was built: Thirteen houses, a big African kitchen, six toilets and six showers and a prayer room for Christians and Muslims, as well as a chicken house to have some fresh eggs every day.



The first inhabitants



The community kitchen

After Aziz left, he directed the construction team from Geneva, and I went to the construction site several times a week in heavy (protective) clothing. And so, the last stone was laid at exactly the right time, because shortly afterwards the state announced that all restaurants, night clubs, bars, shops etc. were allowed to reopen and that the young people who still had to take their school-leaving exams this year and the students had to go back to school from 25 May. Our dilemma was this: How were we going to protect the staff and our 36 children when 6 of our high school graduates and students were coming in and out? Well - quite simply: AYOBÂ, I realised, was the perfect solution. The six young people could live there and so the rest of us would be protected. On 24 May the time had come, the six moved in, together with their village parents, whom I will tell you about in the next letter. And if there are further relaxations, they will move back to the orphanage and at that time it will then be possible to populate the village with the chronically ill people and children who are so close to our hearts. You see: Again and again PROVIDENCE - Providence, it has never left us.



Some children helped the big ones to move into the Village Ayobâ - they all wore masks, on the one hand because there was a guard and a few more workers on the premises, on the other hand we also really want to get the children used to wearing masks.

Dear Sponsors, we are grateful to you all from the bottom of our hearts, grateful for your help, grateful for your trust, grateful that thanks to you so many poor people can keep their dignity or get it back. God bless you. I wish you all the best and love.

Sincerely and with my most respectful greetings

Your, Lotti Latrous