

Stiftung Lotti Latrous  
Rämistrasse 5  
CH 8001 Zürich

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

www.lottilatrous.ch

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Dear Sponsors

While I am writing this, the cold wind is taking away the feeling of spring. I know this as for the time being, I am in Switzerland; a country where the government is well disposed to its citizens. A country where the infrastructure function and in various fields the technology makes life easier; may it be for the running water and toilets. Hopefully these makes it possible for all to live a good, healthy and long life.

### **Grand-Bassam**

When I tell the adolescents of our orphanage in Grand-Bassam about Switzerland, the country where I was born, they have thousands of questions. They want to know if it is really true that in Switzerland no one dies from hunger and everyone will receive medical treatment, even if they don't have any money. In such conversations, tears regularly come down from my eyes and I get a heavy heart. These kids and the adolescents, who sit surrounding me have no one except us and surely, they wouldn't be alive, if twenty years ago we didn't start to shelter them. They would have died from hunger or from Aids. How can I explain to them that there are different worlds and they are living in the third world?

Our kids lost their parents mostly through Aids. Although often they have relatives - aunts, uncles, siblings - they are rejected as they are infected with HIV-Virus. Because of their illness they are not admitted in any public orphanages. That is bad, but as long as the clarifications regarding this virus is not done in the slums, we can't blame the people there. They are not aware of anything else. We try to explain to our kids that you can't force anyone to love you; they have to find their own way in life, which will be full of scars in their hearts, but surely the

right way for them. They have good role models: we have three grown-ups, who will appear for Gymnasium examination followed by them attending College. My heart fills up with gratitude, realising that our kids have a future and sooner or later they will not be dependent on us.

Our family here in Grand-Bassam has recently grew with 3 additional kids. There is the small Ezechiel, only one year old and already an orphan. His grandmother requested us to take him as she herself is ill. There is 12 years old Kalifa, who lived alone, his parents died. He had nothing to eat, he didn't take his medicines any more. If he didn't find a place with us most probably, he would have become a street robber. Then there is Marie-Noelle. She was born in the street from a sick and young mother, who lived in an incredibly poor condition. She brought Marie-Noelle to us just 24 hours after her birth with the request to look after the little one. We also offered the mother to stay with us, she promised to consider it.



Marie-Noelle



Ezechiel

### Best of Luck

Do you still remember what you did in Easter? I shall never forget the Easter of 2019 and that for a simple reason. My husband Aziz, our both daughters Sonia and Sarah, Sonia's husband Sylvian, Sarah's fiancé Rik and Lea, my six-year old granddaughter - all of them came to us in Grand Bassam for two weeks over Easter. Only regret: Selim, our son, was aboard on business and couldn't possibly be with us.

As Sonia and Sarah informed me about their plan, my palpitations went up; I felt a great anticipation but also a big fear; as they always suffered a lot as a result of my decision 20 years ago. The decision to stay here and let them move away with Aziz. How will they react, when they come to visit me here? Up to now they only knew about here from pictures, films and narrations; now they will see the misery and suffering with their own eyes. I didn't worry about Sarah, as since long she comes here a few times a year and I know that she understood the reason of my decision to stay here and does not doubt my choice any more for a single moment. But Sonia? Sylvain, her husband? Rik, Sarah's fiancé? And six years old Lea? I must admit most of all I was worried about Sonia; she had not been in the Ivory Coast for 18 years. I knew that she wanted to visit the gymnasium, where she would have made her matura, our old house, places where she met her friends. But could she identify herself with our project, which took away her mother 20 years ago?

My daughters and the son-in laws, most of all the little Lea settled in soon with us. In spite of the maddening heat, they played football, cooked, tinkered, sang and danced with the kids, who had holidays due to Easter. We organised a wonderful Easter festival with a ecumenical ceremony in our small chapel. Everyone- the Muslims, the Christians came, the room was too small; we prayed, sang, said thanks - it was wonderful. All these included: colouring of eggs, a fine Easter meal and at night we made fire, where Marshmallows and Peanuts were grilled. It was a simple festival, but full of love and great joy.

Naturally I also took my family to Adjouffou, as they ought to know where and how it all started. They were applauded seeing the poverty in the slums and wondered how I could have lived there for 18 years. They were more surprised to hear that I loved that life of living so near to the people, so near to the poverty, so near to be with what really matters in life. The Humanity.



The night of the farewell was not easy, all of us without exception wept. Aziz, Sylvain and Rik, Sonia and Sarah. Lea also, but only after I explained to her that it was impossible for her to stay here, which she exactly wanted to do. As I told her that she must go back as she has to go to school again, she said: "But school is really no problem, your kids here are also going to school. I shall go with them". Surely, I also had tears at the time of farewell, but I was happy too.

Even infinitely as Sonia made me a present - just before we started for the airport, she told me: "Mother, now I can fully understand you that at that time you could not, no you should not have decided otherwise. Now I know the kids, each of them having a face and a story and yes it would have been irresponsible of you if you left them to their destiny". She couldn't have given me a better present, as I know now that at last and forever, I can bury my guilty consciousness.

The life I live because of my projects had much to do with you, dear Sponsors. As without you sooner or later I had to give up my projects. That time about 18 years ago the donations came exactly at the right moment, when millions of people here died from Aids. Because of you I was allowed to follow the kind of life, for which I found some purpose and will further follow the same path as long as my and Aziz's health conditions allow.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your Trust, your Support and your Generosity.  
God bless you.

Sincerely yours,

Lotti Latrous