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Dear Sponsors,

I hope that you are all well despite the circumstances, and I wish you a Happy New Year from the bottom of my heart, above all good health, lots of laughter, sunshine and happiness in spite of everything. And that the virus will soon no longer make life so difficult for us.

Our lives in Grand-Bassam were not as badly affected as yours. COVID has only hit most African countries comparatively lightly so far, in Côte d'Ivoire very few people were infected, how the situation will develop is written in the stars. What we feared in March last year has fortunately not happened so far. Of course, we are still paying close attention and protecting ourselves, but we are not only surrounded by wonderful children's laughter, we are also allowed to take the children in our arms. Which was especially important when our big ones moved out. Without being able to hug them, we wouldn't have wanted to let them go. And there were quite a few: I'll start with Christophe, Jérôme and Eli. They are between 18 and 20 years old and all three have started the Naval Academy. Laurent, who has just turned 20, found a place at a very good hotel management school; he wants to learn to be a chef there. Adama, 21, is studying political science at university. Their big role models are Abel, 22, who is already in his second year at the American university studying mathematics and physics and was awarded a scholarship as the best student in his year! But Carol, 22, also shows them what they can achieve. She is in her second year at university and is studying journalism. Youssouf, 23, trained as a tailor and now works in various functions in our new village, where he is very much appreciated by everyone. And Marie-Jeanne, 24, trained as a pastry chef and found a job in a chocolate factory. Over the festive season and during the holidays, they all come "home" to us. All of our other 35 children, aged between 2 and 20, are also doing very well. Even Yasmine!

YASMINE

Yasmine came to us two months ago, just 14 years old, emaciated to the bone and terminally ill. Suffering from HIV, she reminded me very much of Clarisse, who died in our home one and a

half years ago at the age of only 12. Yasmine had constant diarrhoea when she arrived, which almost killed her. It's a vicious circle: the diarrhoea made her dehydrated and she had to have infusions - but: the many infusions made her haemoglobin level drop so much that we were really scared for her. But Yasmine clung to life with all the strength she had left in her! She didn't want to go yet, she wanted to stay.

Day after day, I put her in one of our wheelchairs and took her to the various events we organised during Christmas time. She was very tired, but she wanted to be there. Once, when our older girls were performing a dance, they had rehearsed for days, she asked me, "Do you think I can dance like that again?" And I nodded vehemently, "Yes, Yasmine, of course you will dance like that again, and much better!" And I don't know which of us smiled more at that. Her or me. And I suppressed with all my might the thought that this dance would perhaps take place in heaven rather than on earth. The only thing that mattered at that moment was that I knew she would dance.

Never in my life will I forget the visit of Santa Claus that we had organised for our little ones. Yasmine was sitting with us in the garden and saw that each child received a gift, and when Santa Claus called her name, taking a small gift from his sack, I asked her if I should tell him to come to her. "No," she replied quite seriously, "I'll go to him!"

She needed all her willpower to get up and go towards Santa Claus, and I was glad that he came towards her too; she threw herself into his arms and sobbed: "Merci, Thank you!" Santa Claus, played by my nephew by the way, burst into tears - I myself had been crying for quite a while. We were allowed to give her a little piece of childhood she had never lived. An incredibly beautiful moment!



Yasmine with Santa Claus

Today, Yasmine is already doing much better. And this most certainly has to do with Ange, who has been living in our village since the beginning of December and who has accepted her like a little sister. He is 19 years old and is - like her - infected with AIDS. Why is he living with us? Well, he did an apprenticeship as a pastry chef but then got infected in March 2020 with a very severe tuberculosis of the spine, which paralysed his legs. The sad diagnosis: Ange will never be able to walk again. When this became clear, his girlfriend left him and with her also his will to live, we were very worried about him. But then we had a kind of "epiphany": what was still missing in our new village was a pastry chef. And who could make those wonderfully filled savoury crepes like no other: Ange! We installed everything so that he could also work from a wheelchair. Since then, he has been cooking dinner for our seniors on Wednesdays. It's stuffed crepes with salad. Everyone likes it so much that it's hard to imagine our village life without Ange. And I must confess that I also "have to" go to the village every Wednesday evening at dinner time – after all, you can always find an important reason.



Ange and Yasmine



Yasmine

AYOBÂ L'ESPOIR

You see: My dream of an African village has come true, and it is called AYOBÂ L'ESPOIR. We inaugurated it on 5 December. We were able to take in seniors who were living alone and in precarious circumstances. AYOBÂ L'ESPOIR translates as "Good Day Hope". What a huge feeling of happiness came over me when I saw them all sitting together in their wheelchairs, leaning on their crutches, but all so incredibly happy and grateful to have finally found a home where they can spend their twilight years in love, respect and dignity. Where there are three meals a day,

hot water for showers, electricity in the cottages; even a TV! Clothes hangers, a chest of drawers for the laundry and - A BED! A bed with a mattress instead of a straw mat on the bare floor. Chickens around the house laying eggs, an herb garden, banana trees, simply everything that belongs in and to a village. Our little ones at the orphanage often come to visit and fill the hamlet with laughter and shrieks. They have found grandparents and our seniors have found grandchildren - it is a world of joy and happiness!

And that's exactly where we spent our Christmas Eve. In the Ayobâ. Aziz built a fire in the village square and all the seniors, patients from the hospital, children from the orphanage and the staff were present. The children sang, Carol read passages from the Bible and there was much prayer, including some for you!



Christmas 2020 in Ayobâ



Ayobâ, the little village on 5 December 2020

Dear sponsors, yes, we have all prayed for you, raised our voices and blessed you, because it is only thanks to your help that our projects exist, that we are able to save the lives of thousands of people, support hundreds of mothers with rent and food, care for countless people when they fall ill, and enrol 800 children in school and much more! In the name of our whole, huge family, in the name of our 80 employees, in the name of all those who are able to live a simple, good, dignified life thanks to your help, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. God bless you.

I remain with my most respectful greetings and wishes, yours.

Lotti Latrous