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*“You who feel no pain at the suffering of others
It is not fitting for you to be called human.”*

Saadi, Persian poet

Dear Sponsors

I hope with all my heart that you are all well.

I have already told you a lot about our new village Ayobâ, now there is news again. In the last two months, my husband Aziz has built a recreation room, a so called “apatam” in Ayobâ. A room in which our seniors have the opportunity to eat their meals together, watch TV together, play board games, and now and then we organise a dance evening with good food. The first one already took place and it was just a great pleasure. The children were also invited and young and old had a good time together. To be able to give all these people a home where they are happier than ever before in their lives is an unspeakably great gift.

And speaking of gifts - it is also a great gift that I can tell you about people and their stories in my newsletters. Usually there are several, in this letter I would like to tell you just one - it is about brotherly love and it is about our orphans and - it makes me incredibly happy. So:

What I never want our orphans to forget is that the world outside our gate is different from the one they know at our place. Our Centre Espoir (Centre of Hope) and I want them to internalise this - is an island. Life outside this island consists of suffering, hunger, disease, poverty and massive injustice. One day I realised that our children hardly know the true reality of Africa, how could they? - they live in a nice warm little nest, which they certainly fully deserve, yes, they do, because they are all infected with HIV, have lost their parents and simply would not survive without us. But there are a thousand other, oh, what am I saying, millions of other children who do not have this luck, who do not live in a beautiful house

including a garden and a mango tree, but in a miserable hut. Children who have no bed, who - if they have lost their parents - have no loving nanny who really cares for them. Children who, if they are sick with malaria, diarrhea, bronchitis or whatever, are not treated because the parents have no money, unless they have heard about us, where they are treated for free. Children who have to go to sleep hungry and, in the morning, have to put on clothes that do not deserve the name. Children who will never enter a school, and if they do, then a public one where there are more than 100 (!) children in a class. Our children should know this reality, which is why I take the older ones from the age of 14 on my visits to Odoss every now and then. This is the name of the slum that borders our property. During these visits, I see who needs what, be it food, a micro-credit or medical care. And the children bring something small with them, so they have a task and at the same time understand what immense good fortune they have. It is very important to me to sensitise our children so that they develop a responsibility towards these people. And I want them to realise that it is not a matter of self-evidence to lead such a privileged life as they are allowed to live with us.

Until recently I hoped that I would succeed - today I know that I have succeeded. Because recently Reine, one of our orphans, came to my office and said: "Maman, today I gave one of my skirts to a girl who lives in Odoss. And this girl was so touched that she started crying!". And when I looked at her in amazement, she said that not only she, but also the other bigger orphans go to Odoss every now and then. To help. And they are creative in their ideas, they bake cakes which they distribute, sort out shoes or clothes from the donations that they receive, which they bring to Odoss. And they are nice clothes. Clothes they like, not ones they don't want! And - just now - I didn't even know all this, also because the nannies didn't tell me anything, but of course keep a caring eye on everything, until Reine came into my office and told me about the pretty skirt and the girl who was moved to tears. I asked her, "And you, how did you feel about it?". She answered me, "It made me cry too, but cry with happiness." Yes, that is peace of mind.

Thanks to Reine, I was not at all surprised when fifteen of our youth and young adults came to me two weeks before Easter and said, "We want to give our Easter dinner to the children of Odoss." I told them that there were several hundred children in Odoss, but that I would help organise something appropriate. I asked one of our staff, who lives in Odoss himself, to find the fifty poorest families. All the others, I promised him, would have their turn another time.

And - it turned out to be the most beautiful Easter! On Sunday, all our children were in the kitchen cooking tons of rice with chicken and lamb and lots and lots of vegetables, which we then packed for the families. And a few days before, the children had put together a "food and essentials pack" for each of the 50 families, with various basic foodstuffs such as rice and flour, salt and sugar and clothes, plus a health booklet, which we are redistributing, along with free treatment with us.





At 12 o'clock the time had come: dozens of women, hundreds of children stood in front of our village Ayobâ, luckily I had remembered to buy four giant packages of candy - unfortunately not sugar-free, they don't have this here - so that not a single child had to go home empty-handed. The joy was indescribable, bright eyes, laughing faces, there was music and lots of balloons - our children had prepared everything so beautifully. And it was not like handing out alms, it was dignified. And again and again we heard, as so often: "Merci! Que Dieu vous bénisse." Thank you, may God bless you. And we wished the same back. And we silently said thank you for allowing us to bring such joy.

Afterwards, we all - all the orphans, the nannies and cooks, Aziz and I - sat down under the big mango tree in the garden and ate rice. Without meat. No poultry. No vegetables. But - never has a meal tasted so good as this one; the joy of giving was greater than the joy of getting, just as it should be.



A few days later we had the inauguration party of our recreation room in Ayobâ, which I wrote about at the beginning of this letter. There was laughter and dancing. And yes, we have to suffer with those who suffer, but it is even more beautiful to alleviate this suffering and replace it with joy and dignity. And we have succeeded in doing that. We have succeeded for years - almost every day. And that we succeed is thanks to you!



Dear Sponsors, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your help, for your compassion and for your prayers. Without you we would be powerless in the face of all the suffering, and I would simply like to say to you what is so often said to me and always goes straight to my heart: "Thank you, and may God bless you".

Yours so very gratefully

Lotti Latrous

For once a PS: Don't forget Reine, I may tell you her story some time later. And I am sure this one will move you to tears in the same way that the gift of a skirt moved the girl from Odoss to tears.