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NEWSLETTER



The Friends of Butoke Charity—
Registered Charity no. 1140094

A day with the orphans

The funds which the Friends of Butoke Charity send to Butoke are spent mainly on the orphanage. Dr Cecile de Sweemer has sent us this description of a typical day at the Butoke orphanage.

Lively activities start at daybreak at our orphanage. At about 5.30 am I can hear the bigger children in the courtyard opening the rainwater reserve, their voices mix with the calls of cocks and wild birds. By 6am at the latest we hear all the voices mixed in a harmony. Everyone greeting and expressing the joy of being alive while hurrying to wash up in the morning freshness. I hear the bass baritone voice of Papa Many and the tenor of his aide Sha Biuma. They are in the kitchen trying to light the fire to prepare hot sugared milk for all the children. Soon Dr Jean and I will join them. Papa Many will quickly buy fifteen loafs of bread in the nearby market. We have a reserve of mayonnaise spread which the children adore. This simple breakfast is received in total grateful silence as it is considered by everyone to be an unheard of luxury.

By about 7am the group starts to break up, some check their schoolbags, others finish their homework. By 7.20 am Sha Biuma calls everyone to go to school as one big team. Today it is Papa Many who guides them as he will ask the teachers for some information about how our children are doing. All but one child, Ngalamulume, passed the exams; we all know he is intelligent, a talented singer, but he is also a troubled soul. His family disbanded and he spent an unknown length of time as a street child. He needs special attention. A last "Au revoir" and they are off.

While the kids are going, Sha Biuma puts the beans for lunch on the brasero. [Continued on page 2]

Building work at the orphanage



In our last letter in August, we explained how funds we had raised were being used to improve the facilities at the orphanage. These solar panels are part of those improvements. Insecurity means that they have to be taken inside each evening.

Recent donations...

The Friends of Butoke Charity aims to send Butoke regular monthly donations so that Butoke can count on a certain level of income from us. Our regular monthly donations have now gone up to around \$1100.

However food is scarce and so more expensive towards the end of each year in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We have therefore used some of the small reserve we have for emergencies and so increased our donations to \$2500 in December and \$2000 this month.

A day at the Butoke orphanage, continued from page 1.

He will engage in a race between cleaning up, washing clothes and preparing the lunch for 12.30 noon. Lunch is rice and beans and vegetables.

Today no child is ill, it usually falls to me to diagnose and treat while Papa Many looks after their comfort and access to drinks and treats. While Dr Jean is in the courtyard meeting collaborators and people in search of medical or other assistance, he refers to the clinic, he counsels.

At 9am we meet in my room, which serves as a sanctuary where we seek each other's and God's guidance. My room offers also privacy when children or adults need to explain sexual or violence problems. Today it is a little girl of 46 months who was raped by a neighbour last night, who needs our attention. We talk with her and her mother. We prepare the way for a gynaecological diagnosis and preventive or curative treatment of STD and, also, for a formal complaint against the violator. By 9.30 am Dr Jean is overdue in the clinic and takes the child and mother with him.

Papa Many has returned and taken off to the market to find suitable vegetables for the lunch and supper. I await his return from the market to learn what information he culled at the school. In the meantime I try to write up our day so far.

Just after midday I hear the many voices of our kids, it is a joyful chorus. The temperature is 33 degrees celsius. They are hungry and Sha Buima is ready. He scoops for each one rice and beans and vegetables. The more hungry ones go for a second scoop. Again the meal is totally silent and they withdraw to their rooms. Some sleep, some work on homework. I hear them again at about 4pm when the temperature becomes more tolerant, small groups recite together poems they learned at school, Ngalamulume or Mbombo start a religious song and most if not all join in for the chorus. We all enjoy the peaceful atmosphere.

By 4.30pm I start calling Papa Many and the biggest kids to work with them on their homework. We work with 3rd and 4th graders first. By 5.30pm we have assured everyone understands what is needed. Soon after they organize their own games of football and other physical games.

Papa Many and I watch and where needed to restore peace and to avoid the games becoming too wild. Today Dr Jean worked in town so he joins us as the day dies.

Supper is served at about 6pm. The little girl who was raped dances with the others to music playing on Radio Okapi.

Francois the coordinator of health arrives at 7pm with the news that a 15 year old girl has been abandoned in Musue Bantu with 5gm percent HMGB, typhoid and peritonitis. A transfusion has been done but the only chance for her is a transfer to Dr Fletcher in IMCK. So without supper Dr Jean hurries away to take her to IMCK

About 8pm the kids go to sleep under their mosquito nets. It used to be that they would fall asleep anywhere in the courtyard or the house but they have developed the discipline to go themselves where they are safe. Good Night God bless you all.

Cecile de Sweemer

A new project for 2013

The orphans that Butoke cares for go to school and Butoke pays for their end of school exams. However many of the children from the wider community that Butoke works with do not complete their primary education. Butoke believes that at most 50% of girls who start primary school complete it. Butoke believes that one of the reasons for this is that parents withdraw their children—particularly their daughters—before the end of primary school to avoid having to pay the \$25 fee for the final exam.

Butoke is investigating the possibility of paying for the end of primary school exams in 2013 for the poorest of the families that it works with. The Friends of Butoke Charity has agreed to try and raise additional funds for this project.

Other news from Butoke

- You will have seen in the media that the Democratic Republic of Congo is once again suffering a period of instability. This led to Dr de Sweemer and Dr Jean cancelling their trip to the UK in October.
- UNICEF recently audited Butoke so it could certify it for future activities. No irregularities were found.

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