

2014
ANNUAL REPORT
THE FRIENDLY HAVEN

www.maison-des-amis.org



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Introduction

The year 2014 was a very important landmark for the Friendly Haven. Our « Hope Foster Home » orphanage and day care centre in Togo was officially inaugurated and started its operations in December 2013. It brings about encouraging prospects, but also challenges.

Regarding our projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 2014 marked a turning point, as we moved from a case by case support of micro-projects to a steady and durable action with the creation of an assistance centre where ear is given with compassion to the survivors of sexual violence.

On top of that, one Congolese Human Rights advocate whom we have been supporting since 2008 got his application for the status of refugee eventually approved.

If the annual report for 2014 reaches you at the beginning of March rather than in January, this is because significant new developments in our activities and initiatives took place during the first two months of this year. They bring a new light to our report and this is why we thought that it was appropriate to include them as well.

1. Our programmes in Togo : First year of operations of our « Hope Foster Home » orphanage : new achievements, new challenges

Let us first keep in mind that, right from the beginning, the Friendly Haven intended to create an orphanage to support poor and homeless children in the region of Atakpamé in Togo. The project was to be realized in connection with a network of local associations driven by the R.A.G.C. (Reflexion and Action Group for Cohesion). We started our programmes in 2008 on a low-key basis with the sponsorship of a few dozens of orphan children. Thanks to the support of our donors and sponsors, we have quickly become able to support several hundred children. Thanks to this programme of children sponsorship, we have earned the esteem and trust of the local population, who was delighted to see the beginning of the construction of our orphanage in 2012.

Therefore, after the grand inauguration ceremony of our « Hope Foster Home » orphanage in December 2013, we had the feeling that a **great achievement** was made but also that it was the **start of a new era** for us.

This year, our orphanage accommodates **26 children (15 girls and 11 boys) aged between 3 and 20**, with a majority of them between 6 and 12 years old, in primary school. All the children go the nearest local schools. Our educators in the orphanage give them regular tutorial support, an important factor for the success of their studies. In addition to providing the children with all the basic essentials (food, medical care, hygiene, clothing), we do our best to also give them what can help them intellectually and affectively. This includes artistic activities designed to have a healing effect (drawing, singing, theatre), celebrations of important moments in the year such as Christmas and Easter, sports, the visit of European volunteers who arrive with bountiful gifts! We also do our best to get ready for any potential crisis situation. For instance, while the Ebola virus was affecting West Africa dramatically, we provided a special food grant. The objective was to ensure that the orphanage had food reserves for several weeks in case quarantine would have been imposed. Fortunately, Togo has so far been spared and we hope this will remain the case while the epidemic will eventually be eradicated in the other countries.



Moments of sharing: meals, disguise workshop, Christmas celebrations

In addition to the 26 children accommodated in the orphanage, other youngsters from families in difficulty also regularly come to the orphanage, to play, drink, eat or benefit from tutorial support. However, in this context, the breakdown of our school bus (please see next paragraph) has affected our project to regularly pick up children in the street inside the city of Atakpamé, as we had originally planned it. It is only a matter of time before we can implement it.

As part of the orphanage activities, we are still facing challenges and this is how we are already bringing elements of solutions:

– the **school bus** that we purchased at the end of 2013 has unfortunately been in operation for a few months only, until September 2014. A rare spare part of the gearbox had to be replaced. To identify the cause of the breakdown and get the spare part from Ghana, the neighbouring country, took several months. We also have experienced some difficulties regarding the customs documents for this bus imported from Spain and bought at the Lomé harbour. Thanks to the tireless efforts of our new orphanage manager, this problem is also about to be solved soon.



– Since September 2014, disagreements have begun to take place between staff members of the orphanage and they have worsened toward the end of the year. To avoid that such a situation becomes detrimental to the children, **we decided to send an international volunteer to take the helm of the orphanage and establish a peaceful and constructive mediation.** **Mr. Bruno Floret**, a hands-on man who has already worked for a number of years in relation with Africa arrived in Togo on February 1st 2015. Since his arrival, the situation has begun to improve to everybody's satisfaction. He has already made a remarkable work to which we pay tribute.

One of the key objectives of our orphanage is to acquire its autonomy and become self-sufficient.

Within this overall framework, our first achievement has been our **agricultural/breeding project, which has started to materialize over the last one and a half years.** It consists in

cultivating the fields of some 25 acres surrounding the orphanage and in breeding sheep and poultry.

This **agricultural project** has been a useful learning experience. We have made good crops of corn and palm oil –very much in use locally- but the results of bean growing have not matched our expectations. Our new orphanage manager has just brought new bean seeds from France, of new different varieties, in the hope of getting better results.



Our fields and the production of yam

As regards the **animal breeding project**, we have so far acquired poultry (we currently have 10 hens and 60 young chickens) and sheep (currently 5 goats and 5 sheep). We will need more funds from our donors to complete the sheds for the animals, on which work has already made progress. We have also suffered from an avian pandemic which has killed some 40 of our hens, leaving us with only 10 alive. To remedy the situation, we have procured 60 young chickens with improved vaccination for greater safety. Meanwhile we are still waiting to get the necessary funds: so far we have not yet obtained all the 21,000 Euros required to fully complete our agricultural project (please refer to the budget section). Therefore we are progressing step by step with what we have at hand. We are currently keeping the sheep in a temporary enclosure within the orphanage compound.



Sheds under construction (left) and work in good progress (right)

We also have a project for an **inn/hotel** on the ground of the orphanage, to allow its complete financial autonomy. The objective is to build this inn/hotel to accommodate individuals, companies and congregations with modern amenities in rural surroundings. The income to be generated by this project will ensure the orphanage's total financial autonomy in future whilst it will also make our work and achievements more broadly known. As funds required to finance this project are substantial, we are gathering them progressively. We will not materialize it until we have collected all the necessary funds.

So, whilst the opening of our orphanage is a success in itself, making it possible to give the bases of a better future not only for the 26 children who are accommodated there but also for the children who come there from time to time, there are also a number of challenges we have to take up. We are rising to them continuously through our actions locally and centrally.

Our other local projects are operating smoothly. Our **350 sponsored orphans continue their schooling** thanks to their foster families and they receive healthcare if they are sick. Their foster families are visited regularly and, for the poorest among them, are given food support.



Distribution of schooling equipment at the start of the school year... it makes children smile!

Our **income-generating activities programme for widowed mothers** is continuing. The ten groups are pursuing their activities in different activities (trade, sewing, vegetable gardening,...). This year, the widows wish to elaborate a project which will unite all ten teams so as to generate more income. This project will be focused on tourism and the sale of local products. Once it is locally designed, you will be informed of the development of this project in our next annual report.



The widows get together on the occasion of Women's Day on March 8 2014

Last but not least, we plan to organize a management committee and local staff for **Montessori educational methods** in 2015. These educational methods have been devised by Maria Montessori at the beginning of the 20th century. They are extremely modern and fit very well with the values that we are advocating: autonomy, respect, collaborative and peace-loving approach.

In this context, our new partner, the **Lycée international Athéna Montessori** (<http://www.lyceeinternationalmontessori.fr>) in the Paris area, will work together with us to sponsor more children, and is considering sending high school students for special assignments within our orphanage, and to provide us with expertise in educational methods. We are delighted with this partnership initiated in January 2015.

2. Our programmes in D.R. Congo : From case by case support to involvement - creation of an empathy centre

Until 2014, we have provided our backing on a case by case basis to local partner associations, especially regarding the support to the survivors of sexual abuse. These associations are based in Uvira, in the South Kivu province, in the eastern part of the country (see map below)



We had proposed to two of our local partners to work together on a common project. These associations are ASD - Amies de Sœur Déborah (FSD – Friends of Sister Deborah), and UCPDHO - Union Chrétienne pour le Progrès et le Développement des Droits de l'Homme (CUPDHR – Christian Union for the Progress and Development of Human Rights). At the beginning of 2014, they made a proposal covering medical and psychological support to survivors with the creation of an empathy centre, the training of the staff who is helping the victims, and the development of income-generating activities for these victims.

For the time being, we are focusing on the first three aspects of the proposal:

- Medical aid, through the coverage of the expenses of the patients going to the general hospital of Uvira (currently 37 women, with another 128 applications pending). We wish to establish a partnership in 2015 with another hospital in the vicinity which could provide medical care to our patients, free of charge.
- Psychological support with the opening of a small empathy centre in the city of Uvira to welcome the survivors, give them attention and understanding, but also food and rest. Let's keep in mind that a psychological support is a must for these women who are blamed and ostracized by their own family after being raped: they are cut off from society and life.
- We have also offered a basic training to the staff who welcomes the survivors. We intend to develop this further in 2015 with a more thorough training, provided to a larger number of persons.



The empathy centre

We have not yet initiated income-generating activities. Before we can make this project sustainable through these activities, we need to consolidate the overall project and help our partner associations to get better prepared for it.

In September 2014, our partner VIVERE Switzerland made all the local visits necessary to our project. We thank them for their expertise and advice. We will pursue our cooperation in 2015.

We would like to apologize for presenting one photograph only. With due respect to the survivors but also for their security, we are not showing pictures of them and their families. Thank you for your understanding.

3. Support for the Congolese Human Rights advocates who have taken refuge abroad : a new hope

The Friendly Haven has been committed since 2008 to support the members of the partner associations in D.R. Congo when possible, when they are prosecuted or subject to acts of violence.

In 2009, one of them, Mr. Thierry Maburika, president of “Jeunes pour le Congo” (Youth for Congo), an association based in Kinshasa, had to leave his country following threats and violence

on him and his family because of a public broadcasting he realized about governance and corruption.

Exiled in Turkey with the help of a friend, a priest who had contacts in this country, Mr. Maburika made everything possible to obtain the status of a refugee from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Friendly Haven and the MIR France -Mouvement International de la Reconciliation (IFOR –International Fellowship of Reconciliation) supported him financially and in his administrative procedures.

After so many years of efforts, hopes and disappointments, Mr. Maburika eventually obtained the status of refugee, and an official visa from the United States in December 2014.

For all of us, it is a considerable relief, even though Mr. Maburika has learnt that his family has been subjected to violence recently. Human rights advocates in D.R. Congo are constantly threatened and the situation does not seem to improve.

We congratulate Mr. Maburika for his perseverance. We will keep you informed on his new life in the United States.



Mr. Maburika at the airport

4. Support to Ukrainian children refugees : urgent action in times of war

We have decided to support the action programme of the VIVERE Suisse association, our partner whose help has been most valuable in Congo. VIVERE is active in Ukraine, especially regarding the fight against human trafficking. However, the recent violence in this country has led this association to act in other fields also. In the eastern part of the country, in the Dombass basin, thousands of families are obliged to leave their home hastily, leaving all their belongings behind, to take refuge in parts of the country where they meet less hostility.



The Dombass basin in East Ukraine

The State is not able to ensure the supply of the most basic needs of so many destitute people. Some local NGOs such as *Avenir* and *Road to Life* have managed, with the support of VIVERE and now also The Friendly Heaven, to provide emergency help to these refugees inside their own country, even though these associations' vocation is to fight against human trafficking. This assistance is mostly provided to children (pediatric medical equipment, strollers, baby food, etc.) as our association aims at helping distressed children wherever they are.

In order for The Friendly Heaven to act, two basic conditions must be met:

- to intervene in favour of underprivileged children and/or youngsters, in an altruistic way,

- to organize our action through one/several local trustworthy association(s), with which we are in regular contact, that we can regularly visit and whose accounts can be checked.



Strollers and medicines for the children refugees

5. **Outlook :** A year 2015 starting on the fast track

For us, **the year 2015 gets off to a great start.** This is why we have wished to keep you abreast of the latest developments in this report.

- **In Togo :**
 - arrival of a new orphanage manager on February 1st.
 - solving the problems related to the school bus
 - deepening our work on the agriculture/breeding project
- **In the D.R. Congo:** regular monthly financial support starting in February for one year regarding medical care and the empathy centre.

Over the short term, this is what we will focus on during the year 2015:

- **In Togo :**
 - to continue to take good care of the sponsored children, and of the 26 children living within the orphanage, and to welcome more street children that we will be able to bring to our place thanks to our bus,
 - to raise new funds for our agricultural/breeding project so as to progress towards the self-subsistence of the orphanage,
 - to solve the management problems through new internal rules of procedure, and the action of our new manager,
 - to implement a community volunteering projects, with several sixth form students from the Lycée Montessori Athéna, coming from the Paris area, accompanied by a professor,
 - to train not only the managerial staff but also the field staff about the Montessori educational methods and gather the necessary material,
 - to give a boost to the widows' income-generating activities to give them financial autonomy, in line with the objective of the orphanage itself
 - to have The Friendly Haven formally becoming an 'officially recognised non-profit organisation' in France, so that our French donors could obtain tax deductibility,

- to be able to act in emergency should it become necessary, in view of the presidential election to take place in Togo in 2015 (with a risk of outbreaks of violence, etc.).

- **In Congo :**

- to continue to provide regular support to the women who survived sexual assaults,
- to find ways of financing the further training of the staff working in the empathy centre and in the field directly with the women,
- to act in emergency for urgent medical support

- **As regards Congolese Human Rights advocates :**

we will continue to be involved if our partners call us in situations of violence

- **In Ukraine :**

we may continue to act if the need remains so blatant, or in any other place where there may be urgent cases (Syria,...) that our VIVERE partner may bring to our attention.

Over the medium and long term, our goal is to reach a greater self-reliance of our orphanage and children sponsorship programme in Togo. This means first food self-sufficiency through our agricultural/breeding project, secondly getting financial autonomy progressively, thirdly achieving autonomy of our local field staff. We are conscious that these three objectives will require time and commitment. But we also know that genuine development programmes are built on the basis of sustainability, patience and perseverance, and rigour.

We also intend to pursue our comparatively more modest programme in D.R. Congo with consistency and through increasing synergy with partners to support and rehabilitate the women who survived sexual assaults.

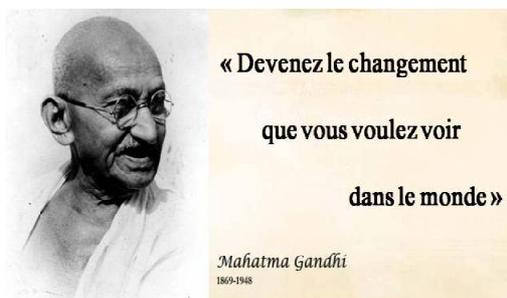
6. Conclusion

With the opening of our orphanage and day care centre in Togo, and of our empathy centre in D.R. Congo, the year 2014 has proven to be a new landmark, with plenty of joy but also pitfalls.

We all realize that establishing aid and support structures to the benefit of the most destitute can only be successful if these structures themselves are sustainable.

To achieve such a necessary objective, we still need your help. Our goal is to make our structures deeply rooted and sustainable so that they can help distressed children not only today ... but also tomorrow.

Ensuring autonomy and sustainability is our challenge: let us take it up together!



“Become the change you want to see in the world” (Mahatma Gandhi)

Attachment : Financial report