

# THE SVP IN SUDAN – Christmas 2005

## by: Ian Mawdsley

### **Kamal reports from Khartoum**

#### **Program for street children (Homes and Farms)**

Our program for street children is going on well. We presently take full care of 615 children and teenagers who all go to school. Our social workers and the foster parents of our homes have all attended proficiency courses this year. These courses are given by experts commissioned by the authorities. This all the more enhances our credibility with the authorities, which is a good thing for the smooth running of the program. The training topics were: Career counseling, problems solving techniques, and stress management. A hundred of our young adults, who are soon to leave our centres, will benefit from this psychic and moral support, and thus face their future with more serenity.

We are presently studying the project of a new farm, made up of three different lodging units, each one vast enough to accommodate a hundred children. We have already bought the land: it is close to the other farm of Gebel Awlia, which facilities can be used for the vocational training courses; this means an appreciable saving as we shall not need to build and equip the buildings for these courses. The financing for these units has still to be found and is being asked from possible donors. We shall keep you informed about the developments of this project.

#### **Baby feeding**

Nearly 10,000 children visit our 18 centres to get their daily meal, although "only" 8,230 are officially registered. We do not have the

heart to throw out the "gate-crashers"!

Some of these centres are more than 100km from the city. They all are built in masonry, with very simple local materials. No doubt that the health of the children is getting better thanks to the food that we give them. We can see their satisfaction after the meal, and the happiness of their mothers. A woman, passing by the market place, was so surprised to see no child searching food in the refuse, that she cried out in her own language: "Thank you my God to have sent us Saint Vincent de Paul to feed these babies"! We report this anecdote to underline how vital this program is for these destitute families. That is why we suggest to all our visitors in Sudan to go and see one of these centres for themselves, so that they can readily visualise with their own eyes how crucial they are for these children.

#### **Medical program**

Our mobile clinics provide medical care to the staff and the pupils of the bamboo schools ("rakubas") of the Archdiocese. In 2005, we treated more than 8,000 patients. Many pupils suffer from malaria, bilharziasis, skin disorders, eye diseases, and all kind of other troubles. The permanent clinics and the Friday mobile ones provide care to the displaced people. We are glad to tell you that, in the future in the camp of Omdurman, our two clinics will be used to look after pregnancies, in co-operation with the maternity hospital of the Sisters. We provided some of the furniture and the equipment required by this new essential service. We shall keep you informed how this addition to our medical program



has been received by the female population of the camps.

#### **Vocational training workshop**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, 307 students from the Mayo region attended their awarding ceremony. We had invited local and international NGOs' officers and government representatives, who were quite impressed. In August, we had already organized a similar ceremony in Wad el Bashir, as we reported it in our previous letter. We hope that the obvious popularity of these public events with the population of the camps will help us to defuse the difficulties we are facing sometimes with the authorities.

We make it a point to try and keep in touch with our graduates to find out whether they find jobs and keep statistics to determine what the most "marketable" careers are. One case among others: it was reported that one of our graduates, who had no trade and had to spend the whole week far away from his family in order to get small jobs here and there, has just got a full-time work! No doubt that this vocational training program definitely makes it possible for these displaced people to hope in a better future.

We take this opportunity to thank you all for your supporting our cause and for your concern for the destitute in Sudan. Without your contribution, we would not have got anywhere. We thus ask Our Lord to bless you and to reward you all in His own way.

## Sister Jean reports from El Obeid

In spite of the peace developments, some areas of Darfur continue to be the scene of wide-spread killing, rape and pillaging. Peace talks are scheduled to begin on the 29<sup>th</sup> November in Ahuja, Nigeria, and the UN's envoy to Darfur, Jon Pronk, has visited the leaders of the main rebel factions there to persuade them to attend the talks. (We now know (2<sup>nd</sup> Dec) that the two leaders are actually at the peace talks, Thank God).

We, ourselves, Good Shepherd Sisters, have been asked by the Don Bosco priests, who have opened a house in El Obeid for the orphaned boys of Darfur to establish a 'peda terre' near the northern camps there, to help the traumatized girls and women. Our general team are considering the request.

Our women and children's programmes in El Obeid town itself are developing. The women, who have attended a three-month course at our home centre, on dressmaking and home economics, now produce and sell their own products.

The classes for uneducated street boys (120 of them) are doing well. After four years of basic studies, they go on to train for a year at the Don Bosco Training Centre, or continue their studies at Government schools, where they do well. Six of them have currently passed their end of secondary studies, and three boys are studying engineering at Khartoum University.

Our clinic has been participating, for two years now, in the National vaccination Programme. At the beginning of the year 4000 infants and small children were inoculated during the anti measles campaign, and the anti-polio programme is now a regular part of the services. Recently, prevention treatment of Hepatitis B has been introduced for children. Though very modest, the clinic has received commendation from the local Health Authorities for offering the best preventive services in Western El Obeid.

One of our two kindergartens has been rejuvenated and now boasts

three new buildings. Both the kindergartens continue to produce a happy lot of young children, in spite of the poverty of most of the families. During the rainy season, they delight in modelling a variety of buildings with the damp sand of the school compound. I am always amazed at their creativity and capacity for joy.

This year we had the joy seeing two young Sudanese women make their first vows with us in El Obeid, and another sister make her definitive commitment in Khartoum. Other young women are thinking of joining us. We ask you to pray for them that they may join us so as to further our mission in Sudan, especially now that the South is open to us.

It remains for me to thank you all most sincerely on behalf of Sr. Maria Costa (Superior) and our little community of four for all your concern and support during the past year.

You are part of our mission, and without you, we would not be able to continue it. May God reward you all abundantly.

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The SVP in Sudan is facing a major funding crisis. A reduction in donations throughout the UK and Europe, brought about mainly by public attention to recent natural disasters, together with high inflation in Sudan has created a huge hole of \$100,000.

Another contributory factor is the withdrawal of funding "because of other demands" from Pro Victimis and the French Government.

It has been agreed that SVP (England & Wales) will contribute \$300,000 (£168,000) towards the total cost of **\$1,558,000** for the coming year. This effectively utilises all the funds we had at May this year.

**We are depending on raising a similar amount during this year to pay for next year.**

**Thank you for your continued support – we desperately need your help.**

I will be visiting our brothers and sisters in Sudan again from 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> of February and I know I can take with me your prayers and greetings. I wish you all the very best for 2006

**Ian Mawdsley**