

MISSION

NEWS



HANDMAIDS OF THE SACRED HEART

December 2019 – 2020

A BAMBOO PROJECT



Sr Ana tells us about their new “Bamboo Project” to help the poor people. Many things can be made out of bamboo, and furniture making is most practical in Sukaria, INDONESIA.

THE JOY OF HELPING

“Many things have happened since I last wrote to you. The important thing for us here in Sukaria is to seize the opportunity to help these poor people. We are experiencing the joy of living dependent on the **Divine Providence**. Now I would like to tell you what we have been doing for our **Bamboo Project**.



BAMBOO TRAINING

We have had the first “Training Day” about bamboo furniture making. The firm “Bambubos” sent two very good experts for this demonstration. The people’s participation was good. The experts were really so helpful and willing. For those who participated it was a very good experience. They



had a great opportunity to see that **furniture making is something within their reach and not so difficult**. A young man, Juni, soon showed great enthusiasm as he saw the possibilities offered by bamboo for furniture making. He showed great ability in the handling of the tools for the job. We talked to the Director of Bambubos who immediately agreed to take him to Yogyakarta to train together with his staff. Juni did go to Yogyakarta, but only after overcoming their traditions that demand that sons work on palm oil plantations and contribute to the family economic situation.

BAMBOO PLANTING

The **“Planting of the Bamboo”** was the most awaited moment. First we celebrated a **religious rite according to their “Dayak” tradition**. Then together we planted **the first bamboo** along the borders of the rivers of Sukaria.



Finally, we distributed the different kinds of bamboos to the participants. The following days the people continued planting bamboo in their own property, helped technically by the teaching staff from Bambubos. Little by little even those, who originally did not want to, now are coming to collect **“their bamboo”**, to plant it by the little brooks passing through their territory. **We too planted bamboo in our land and by the little brook that runs close to our house. We still have to plant more bamboo and the people also!**



WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE

On the initiative of the village Chief, we got together with the young people and children, a group of 30 people – all very enthusiastic. We planted bamboo by a lake **contaminated by the chemicals used in the extraction and washing of bauxite**, and also

in a swampy area (previously forest), close to the plantations of palm oil. By planting bamboo along the little brooks, we hope that, in a few years the water (lost by deforestation) may remain there and even increase.

BUSINESS FORMATION

On the suggestion of Fr Budy, we got in touch with the Credit Union. We wanted the CU to give our people information about business and sustainable productivity. Now the CU organise the programme, we provide the venue and help to



motivate the people. The women are working on “cake making” and “fish balls”. The men are working on the possibility of developing a “honey business” because honey is abundant in Sukaria. The women who normally do not take part in anything, **are most enthusiastic and cooperative in this. While they are working with their cake making and fish balls, we all talk about education, their children, their difficulties...**”

RICKSHAW PULLERS



*The rickshaw, a two-wheeled vehicle, is pulled by a man or a man on a bicycle. Sister Celine tells us about the great difficulties in which the rickshaw pullers are working in **Odisha, INDIA.***

TERRIBLE LIVING CONDITIONS

The Handmaids have been working with the **rickshaw pullers**, here in **Odisha**, since 2014. We as a community felt that they are the people most in need of a helping hand. Many of these rickshaw pullers are migrants from another state. Their living conditions are pathetic. They stay in rented houses, with only one room for the whole family, for sleeping and cooking. Some may even stay in the railway station where they work.



The men ride their rickshaws in the scorching sun, in the chilly winter nights and even in heavy rain. This is how they earn their living and support their families on their meagre wages.

VICTIMS OF SOCIETY

These people **have been very badly treated by life, often victims of human rights violations. It is not surprising that frequently they take refuge in alcohol.** This situation worries us a great deal, because it is part of the **downward spiral of loss of dignity.**

TRYING TO HELP

We visit the men’s families and their work place in order to build a relationship with them, to understand them and their families as well as their economic situation. Besides having much dialogue with them and accompanying them on their hospital visits, **we have organised some seminars on health, alcoholism, hygiene, labour rights and household economy.**

OUR PROJECT

We learned that the **rickshaws** the men are riding are not their own, so our project is to **enable each man to own a rickshaw.** Some generous



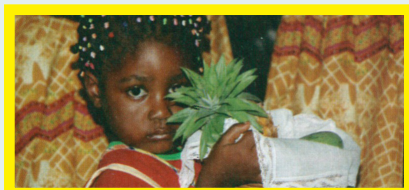
benefactors have come forward to help us in this venture. A rickshaw costs 18,000 rupees, approximately €220. So far we have given them 4 new rickshaws and 28 second-hand rickshaws. Becoming owners of their rickshaws is the first step not only in avoiding exploitation, but also in having financial identity.

TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT



It is worth every effort to extricate these poor people from this spiral! As our Pope Francis often tell us, *“it is necessary to act, to work towards development”*. Therefore, this year we are giving scholarships to five children from these families with the hope that in the future they may have better jobs and more options”.

From **DESPERATION** to **HOPE**



Our Sisters tell us how the very sick people are being helped by their Palliative Care Programme in Bicop, CAMEROON.

PALLIATIVE CARE IN CAMEROON

“In 2011 we began an “Ambitious Project”, together with the NGO *Palliativos sin Fronteras*, (Palliatives without Borders): **the implementation of Palliative Care in Cameroon**. The project developed very well, with wonderful results. From April to June of 2018, we have treated, in Bicop alone, 167 patients in **Palliative Care**. The most frequent cases are those suffering from terminal AIDS, followed by those with cancer, cirrhosis and terminal heart disease.



NEW PROGRAMME

Since the end of 2013, and thanks to the collaboration of PsF, we have developed, here in **Bicop**, a programme of home care called **“Door-to-Door”**, for **the implementation of**

Palliative Care in isolated rural zones. We are grateful to the Adeste Foundation who has given us the opportunity to train our Psychologist in a Palliative Care Unit, in Madrid for six weeks, and to the Handmaids who gave her hospitality during that period.



IN THE TROPICAL FOREST

Our Mission, situated in the south of **the tropical forest**, encompasses **28 isolated villages**, some very distant from us, which can be accessed only on motor-



cycle on unmade, almost impassable, roads. For this we have **drawn up a project** which includes the **purchase of a motorcycle and the contract of a nurse, who using the motorcycle, can visit terminally ill patients in their homes in very distant and isolated places.** It must be kept in mind that **in all these houses there is no running water. Some families have to travel 3 or 4 km. on foot to reach a well; and, of course, there are no bathrooms in the houses.** This gives us some idea of the conditions in which **these terminally ill patients spend the last months of their lives, affected by end-stage**

chronic hepatitis, end-stage HIV, cancer or long-term renal and liver disease - and with unsuccessful treatment.

GREAT SATISFACTION

It gives us **great satisfaction** to see how the **patients come, having suffered so much, and nevertheless, leave stabilised and with big smiles on their faces. We cannot cure these patients, but we can alleviate their symptoms and give them a better quality of life.** At this time we are following a 38

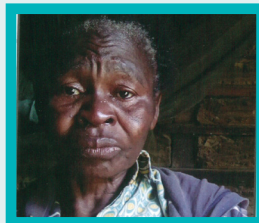


year old patient who arrived in Bicop with an ascites (fluid in the abdomen) of 32 liters. She came here leaning on a stick because she was unable to walk. However, after three days, she was roaming the hospital, delighted with her life because now she can walk. Of course, we cannot cure her cirrhosis due to her hepatitis B, but we can manage to give her a good quality of life for the time remaining to her.

GRATEFUL AND FULL OF HOPE

We are most grateful to all who have helped us with our work.

At this time in Bicop, there are three Doctors, one Psychologist, two Nurses and a laboratory Technician. This interdisciplinary team allows us not only to **attend to our patients better, but also helps us to cope with the emotional toll that these treatments entail.**



We will finish with the words of the father of a girl treated here in Bicop, who told us the other day, **“I cannot forget you. We came here in desperation because of my daughter’s illness, and we have found a family. Thank you”.**

HANDMAIDS IN CUBA



The Castro Revolution forced the Handmaids out of Cuba, leaving schools, Church, everything behind. A few Sisters are back, Sr Eduarda tells us something about their work now in very difficult circumstances.

SUFFERING WITHOUT HOPE

“In 2007 the Handmaids returned to Cuba. There are only three Sisters. They are present in two cities: **Caibarién**, in the north, by the sea, and **Santa Clara** situated in the centre of the island, **the fourth largest and the most old-looking city in Cuba.**

The Cuban people are living in very difficult conditions both economically and socially; they suffer without hope. Our task is to teach the Cubans that God loves them, that Jesus is alive and is among them, that reconciliation among them and with history is possible; to help them to realise the great dignity of each as a human person, even a Cuban!

LOOKING FOR GOD

Many people are approaching the church to ask for the Sacraments. Many are called “perseverantes” (The persevering), because throughout many years they formed catechetical groups to **help themselves to grow as people and as Christians.** The parishes are very big, and many people live far from their church. Transport is very bad or non-existing. The majority of people have no cars. So the **Church of Cuba**, which is very missionary, **goes out to meet the people where they are.** This gave rise to the **Mission Houses.**



Some Catholics make their houses available week after week for the Catholic Community. It may be a room, sometimes small, or simply the entrance to the house. People do this entirely free. These houses are called **Mission Houses.** The Priest goes every week, or every fortnight, according to availability, and the day becomes a **Community Day.** There is catechesis, in small

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Baptism



Anointing of the Sick

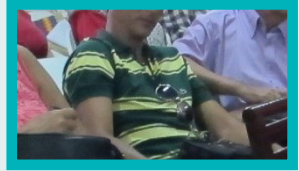


Baptism and Marriage

groups, for children, adolescents, young people and adults. On Sundays they have Mass and Confessions and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism, Marriage and the Anointing of the Sick. On Ash Wednesday there is the Ashes, in Advent the Advent Wreath... At Christmas, the Day of the Kings there are presents for the children. On feast days we hire a carriage to bring people to Church... All this is very difficult to organise and very expensive in Cuba today.

THE DIOCESAN FORMATION CENTRE

One Sister has been given the direction of the DFC together with three lay people. There are nearly 500 pupils (university students and national teachers) and 80 teachers who are mainly university professors. The Centre has two interesting projects: **to form a Staff** that conforms to the Centre's mission statement (Christian humanism), and **the Summer School, for the pedagogical formation of teachers.** The Summer Camp is attended by over 100 students, all teachers. The participants (so that they can eat!) pay only a symbolic fee, because of the poor economic condition. Only help from abroad makes this possible.



SUMMER CAMPS

In the Summer we have Summer Camps for children and adolescents. For a week nearly 100 children come to a church or chapel, where they have formation talks, work-shops, manual work, games... The Summer Camps take a long time to prepare because of the difficulty in getting transport, materials, the food... but the children love them and so look forward to them!...**Many are the needs and challenges in the Cuban Mission. But the important thing is for each Cuban person to feel valued and loved by God present among them**".



A SURPRISE VISIT TO THE YOUNG CUBANS

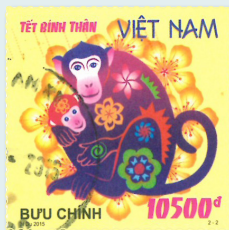
During
World Youth Day
Panama 2019



**Pope Francis visited
the Young People from Cuba
lodged in our school of Panama**

The Pope with our Sisters





*Wishing you a Beautiful Christmas
and a New Year of Peace and Happiness*

many thanks

to all who have sent:

DONATIONS

POSTAGE STAMPS

Please continue to support our Missions

Send what you can to Sister Maria

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