

Friday, March 27, 2009

ZIMBABWE

HDI=0.513



Population: 13.162.065 h.
Area: 386,850 Km²
Capital: Harare

STATISTICS

DEMOGRAPHY

Population: 13,162,065
Annual growth: 0.6%
Urban population: 37%
Urban growth: 2%

HEALTH

Life expectancy: 37 years.
Men: 38 years-Women: 36 years
Children per woman: 3.2
Maternal mortality rate:
1,100 in 100,000 newborns
Infant mortality: 79 every 1,000
Mortality < 5 years old: 129 every 1,000
Calories a day: 2,004 per capita
6 doctors every 100,000 inhabitants
Access to drinking water: 83%

EDUCATION

Literacy: 90%. Men: 94%- Women: 88%
Primary school: 82%. Men: 81%-Women: 82%
Secondary school: 34%. Men: 33%- Women: 35%
University: 4%
Primary School teachers: 1 teacher every 39 pupils

COMMUNICATIONS

362 radio sets, 56 TV sets,
24 phone lines every 1,000 inhabitants

ECONOMY

Population living with less than 1 US\$ a day: 56.1%
GDP per capita: US\$ 2,065
Annual growth: -4.2%
Annual inflation: 350.2%
Imports: US\$ 2,515 million
External debt: US\$ 4,797 mill.: US\$ 364 per capita
Help received: US\$ 186 mill.; US\$ 14 per capita

LAND

Forests and woodland: 45.3%. Arable land: 8.3%. Others: 46.1%

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

Health: 4.4% of GDP
Education: 4.7% of GDP
Defence: 3.4% of GDP



LETTER FROM ZIMBABWE

Sad daily life in a country sunk in the chaos

May 2008

Life in Zimbabwe is very sad. We have the highest inflation rate in the world at 165000%. Life expectancy is the lowest at 33 for women and 35 for men. Unemployment is at 80%. Eight years ago we were the breadbasket of the region but now there is no food after the government grabbed land from former white farmers in a very chaotic manner. Because of the scourge of HIV/ AIDS, the country has one of the highest numbers of orphans in the world.

It is very difficult to get food and what is in a few shops is imported food which most people cannot afford. A loaf of bread cost \$100 000 000.00 if one can find it. On a daily basis as a parent I have problems trying to give my child something to eat at school.

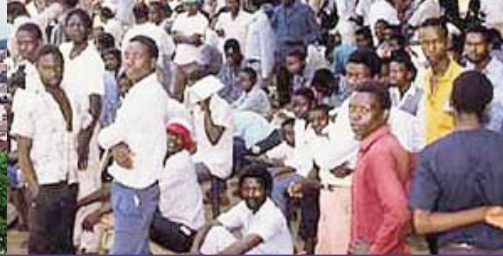
Most social services have broken down. Electricity goes off most of the time and the taps have no running water in most places because there is no foreign currency to purchase chemicals. Garbage is no longer being collected from households despite the fact that the City Councils bill people every month. The hospitals have a shortage of doctors and medication as most doctors and nurses have left the country. Teachers as well as other professionals have also left the country. It is estimated that about 4 million Zimbabweans now live outside the country in a country whose population is about 12 million.

Lately because the ruling party lost the elections a lot of politically motivated violence is taking place. At the moment, people are really frustrated because the president who is 84 years old and has ruled the country for 28 years since independence will not relinquish power.

Vista de Harare (Zimbabwe)



Esperando el trabajo en Harare (Zimbabwe)



Carararas Victoria (Zimbabwe)



HISTORY

Already in the 5th century the Bantús discovered deposits of gold, copper, and tin and developed a refining technique to work these metals which produced a great market and a cultural expansion, developing important commercial contacts with Asia until the middle of the 15th century.

From the 16th century, the presence of the Portuguese put an end to the fruitful commerce with the Orient and brought about an economic decline in the region, causing a regression of ten centuries.

In 1889 Lobenguela, king of the Ndebeles, granted the British South Africa Company the monopoly of exploiting the mineral resources of the country in exchange for arms, a lifetime pension and a steamship. The British government gave the BSA control of the commerce. Without any legal title, the Company installed itself in the Shona territory whom they attacked and conquered, being governed by the BSA with the name of Southern Rhodesia and becoming in 1923 a British colony.

This government published a Law for the Distribution of Land to separate and delineate each section: half for the Whites and half for the Negroes when these were 96% of the population! In addition, the land given to the Whites was better, with more rainfall, higher lands and the best for agriculture and cattle raising.

From 1953 to 1963 Southern Rhodesia formed part of the central African Confederation together with Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyassaland (now Malawi). In 1965 the colonizers with Smith at the head proclaimed a unilateral Declaration of Independence. This provoked a cruel civil war organized by the ZAPU (Popular Union of Zimbabwe) among the Negro guerillas and the minority White government.

In 1979, after fraudulent elections, bishop Abel Muzorewa took over the government and changed the name of the country to Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. The general elections of 1980 were easily won by Robert Mugabe of the ZANU party (National African Union of Zimbabwe). Great Britain handed over the power to the victor, though the Whites maintained their economic and political privileges reflected in the land holding: 4,500 White farmers owned 50% of the most productive land in the country.

The government of Mugabe started with a message of reconciliation to abolish racist legislation and reconstruct the economy affected by seven years of war. Shortly after the ZAPU and the ZANU unified into the Patriotic Front and the country went more and more toward single party rule, deciding to abandon the Marxist-Leninist ideology in favor of a mixed economy.

Mugabe and his party are still governing, practically without opposition but with reiterated inter-national denouncing of fraud, violation of Human Rights, complicity in cases of torture, arrests and brutal repression.

In August of 2002 the white colonists who had been told they had to abandon their lands, defied the government causing a series of violent incidents and repressions without precedent in the conflicts.

Today Zimbabwe is going through the worst humanitarian crisis since its independence. Life expectancy has sharply dropped to 36 years and the number of orphans is the highest in the world: 1.3 million children who have been orphaned because of AIDS which has infected 25% of the population.

LETTER FROM ZIMBABWE

We people in Zimbabwe believe that life in Europe and America is much more comfortable because there is democracy and the governments respect human rights laws. People there have easy access to basic necessities and don't go hungry. The rulers there do not try to die in power but relinquish power as soon as they finish their term of office.

The people of Zimbabwe need assistance as they have failed to remove the corrupt government of Robert Mugabe. Assistance is also needed so that school teachers, don't keep leaving the country so that children can stay in school. Assistance is required to enable nurses and doctors to stay and also medication which people can afford so that people don't die of diseases that can be cured. Children also need food assistance so that they can continue to go to school. Lot of people are dying because they have no access to the life saving medication.

We received this letter in May 2008 from an intermediary. It was written by a 50 years old woman who, for security reasons, has asked not to be named. She is also afraid of giving out her email address.

Excerpt from **Cartas del Sur al Norte** (Letters from the South to the North), PPC, Madrid 2009

GOD ALSO WRITES

The Prophet Habakkuk when facing a situation of extreme injustice, recognises God's voice in his own scream of reproach.

"The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw. O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble?... I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint." (Ha 1:1-2. 2:1)

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO WRITE

Besides the daily struggles derived from the political situation, the country is being swept under a cholera epidemic. Write to the President of the OMS European Delegation urging it to intensify its programmes in Zimbabwe:

Marc Danzon

Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS)

Oficina Regional para Europa - 8, Scherfigsvej - DK-2100 Copenhagen 0 - Denmark

Or by email: postmaster@euro.who.int

Saturday, March 28, 2009

EAST TIMOR

HDI =0.514



Population: 1,192.515 h.

Area: 14,870 Km²

Capital: Dili

STATISTICS

DEMOGRAPHY

Population: 1,192,515

Annual growth: 1.5%

Urban population: 28%

Urban growth: 5.2%

HEALTH

Life expectancy: 61 years.

Men: 60 years-Women: 62 years

Children per woman: 6.5

Maternal mortality rate: 660 in 100,000 newborns

Infant mortality: 52 every 1,000

Mortality < 5 years old: 61 every 1,000

10 doctors every 100,000 inhabitants

Access to drinking water: 58%

EDUCATION

Schooling registration rate: 20%

Secondary school: 20%.

University: 10%

Primary School teachers: 1 teacher every 51 pupils

ECONOMY

Annual growth: 2.5%

Help received: US\$ 153 mill; US\$ 172 per capita; 45.1% of GDP

Women: 38% of the economically active population

LAND

Forests and woodland: 53.7%. Arable land: 8.2%. Others: 4.6%

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE
Health: 7.3% of GDP

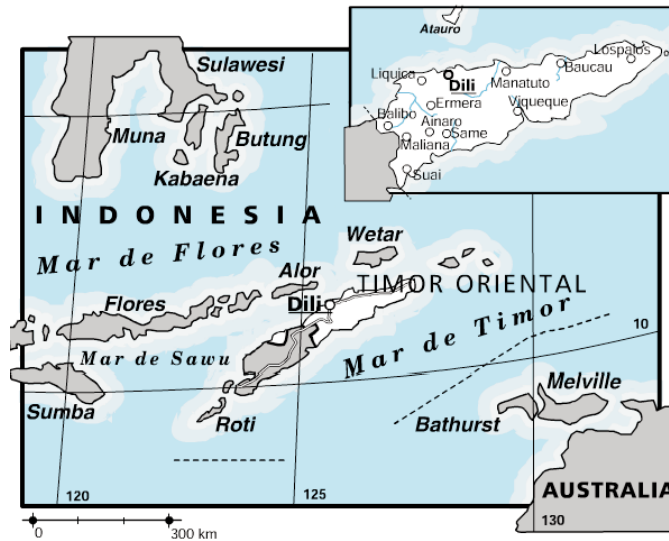
Geography: Located between Australia and Indonesia, the territory of Timor-Leste includes the eastern part of the island of Timor, the dependence of Oecusse, located northwest of the island; Atauro island in the north, and the islet of Yaco in the east. Volcanic topography of the island is mountainous, covered with dense jungles. Its tropical climate favors a rainy important hydrographic network. The southern area is flat and suitable for cultivation. Agriculture is the basis of its export economy, with the production of copra, coffee, cotton, rice and sandalwood mainly tobacco.

People: The Maubere People originated in Melanesia and Malaysia. In 1975 there were nearly 20,000 Chinese, who arrived during the twentieth century, and 4,000 Portuguese, living in the country. Amnesty International estimated at 210,000 the number of victims of the Indonesian occupation. There are 6,000 Maubere refugees in Australia and 1500 in Portugal.

Religion: Most of the population practice traditional religions. Catholics make up 30% of the population .

Languages: Tetum is the national language. About 40 dialects are spoken. During the Indonesian occupation was forbidden to use these languages in educational settings. Classes were taught in Bahasa, the Indonesian language. This situation was reversed after formal independence in 2002. A minority also speaks Portuguese.

Female EAP : Women constitute 38% of the EAP (Economically Active Population).



LETTER FROM EAST TIMOR

Participating in the construction of one's country

12th May 2008

Hello to my friends in Spain.

My name is Ozias Correia and I'm 23 years old. I study at the University of Peace Faculty of Social and Human Sciences in the Department of International Relations.

I live with my family: my parents, my four brothers and my two sisters. I am the eldest and that, according to tradition, means that it is my "duty" to help my parents in all aspects and also to look after my brothers and sisters. The most difficult thing is going to be finding work very quickly once I finish university so that my brothers and sisters can also study. Families make a great effort for their elder children but the younger ones are the responsibility of the eldest because in my family, like in most families, economic resources are becoming ever more scarce.

My biggest dream for the future is to become the "engine" of change for the new generations.

East Timor is a sovereign nation, newly born in the 21st century. Because we are a new nation, we obviously have little experience about anything, but we are on the right road to nurturing our capacity for self-determination with a constructive and open mind from both an internal and external viewpoint.

It is not easy living in our society because we still think and act like an occupied country. The present situation is not conducive to the most creative and daring initiatives and it even seems that sometimes a more passive attitude or spirit is encouraged.

My main concern is to make the most of the present. I can't wait for others to act or for tomorrow to come. I have to be the one and I have to act today. I have to be one of



HISTORY

The first news we have with respect to East Timorese origin dates from 1515, when Portuguese settlers arrived on the island. The Portuguese navigators settled in this territory to establish a base for their business enterprises since Timor had abundant natural resources such as wood.

The Portuguese came upon a native people, who were in various chiefdoms and caste-based clusters. Some sources speak of five groups, who were the Liurari, made up of the chiefs and kings, and the Data, composing and nobles and warriors, the ema-kingdom, class to which belonged the free peasants, the Ata, who were slaves; and the Lutum, a caste comprising nomadic shepherds. These people spoke their local language and practiced their traditional religions. With the Portuguese colonization, Catholic missionaries came to spread Christianity and the Portuguese language among the population.

Religious orders, such as the Jesuits or the Dominicans, were involved in this evangelization. The latter had great religious influence on the future of the area since collaborated in the establishment of a clergy, who came under the authority of Portugal.

As Portugal was working developing its enterprises in Timor, the Dutch settled in the neighboring islands. The expansion of the Dutch colony established its domination, which facilitated its success in a series of battles with Portugal. The two countries signed several treaties over the course of one hundred years. In 1893 a treaty was signed ceding control of the eastern half of the island and other areas to Portugal and the western half to the Netherlands. The capital of Portuguese territories was established in Dili, a city that was founded in 1869.

Timor was invaded by Japan in World War II, but with the end of the war the population reestablished the Portuguese Administration which continued to control the country.

An important moment for Timor came with the Carnation Revolution in Portugal, the milestone that marks the beginning of Portuguese decolonization process that included all its territories "departments", including Timor. The party that led the process was the FRENTILIN (Liberation Front of Independent East Timor), which proclaimed independence on November 28, 1975. That independence was not officially recognized by Portugal.

Expansionist ambitions, evident earlier, led Indonesia to invade Timor on December 7, 1975, just nine days after the proclamation of its independence. Neither Australia nor the United States prevented the annexation that was effectuated on June 2, 1976, but never recognized by the United Nations.

The Indonesian occupation of Timor was marked by violence against the Timorese people. Decisive event in the referendum that was held in 1999, which adopted the East Timorese independence, which was not recognized until 20 May 2002, entering a part of the UN on May 27, 2002.

A Decisive event that took place was referendum held in 1999, in which the East Timorese opted for independence, a status that was not recognized until 20 May 2002, when the new country was accepted into the UN on May 27, 2002.

The First President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste was the guerrilla fighter Xanana Gusmao.

Since independence, the highlights have been the efforts in rebuilding the country in both its humanitarian and economic dimensions. In 2006 the country became a major, destabilizing, political crisis which fractured the peace of the country with social unrest and demonstrations by those who demanded better conditions for workers. These disturbances resulted in the deaths of several people. Currently the President is José Ramos Horta, who was elected in 2007 and the Prime Minister is Xanana Gusmao.

LETTER FROM EAST TIMOR

those who find a way of creating and fostering a positive atmosphere in my surroundings in order to motivate the young generation to shake off their passive attitude and get involved in the development of our nation.

This challenge is often hindered by the "tradition" or what we call *lia*, which still prevails when it comes to organizing the family finances. If there is a wedding or a period of mourning etc. in the family then all possible resources are spent on it and the children's education is relegated to second place. Furthermore, the concept of tradition is becoming contaminated by the capitalist world. It is slowly losing its true essence and cultural identity; and is running the risk of becoming a "commodity". What a shame! This is another one of my challenges as a young Timorese citizen; how to revive our customs and traditions and give them back their true meaning and identity so that they will live on through future years.

So I would just like to tell the young people who live in developed countries like Spain, and who have the opportunity of receiving a good education and of living in an atmosphere that encourages creativity, to make the best of everything and to find the way of helping others. The aim of all young people everywhere should be how to make the most of the opportunities that life offers us.

Ozias Correia

Ozias Correia was born in 1985. He is a founder member of the "Association of Young Students of Fatumassi" and participates in many activities with the community that the sisters of *The Slaves of the Sacred Heart* run in his village.

Excerpt from **Cartas del Sur al Norte** (Letters from the South to the North), PPC, Madrid 2009

GOD ALSO WRITES

God has clearly transmitted what is the future he wants for his people.

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart," (Jr 29:11.13)

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO WRITE

Ozias Correia and his friend Marcelo dos Santos, whose letter you'll find on the web of the campaign, would love to contact people from other countries. You can write to them through the Sisters' address:

*Escravas do Sagrado Coração de Jesus
P.O. Box 299 – Dili – Timor Leste*

Or by email to Sister Inés Oleaga's address.:

inesoleaga@hotmail.com

Sunday, March 29, 2009

DJIBOUTI

HDI= 0.516



Population: 820,183 h.

Area: 23,180 Km²

Capital: Djibouti

STATISTICS

DEMOGRAPHY

Population: 820,183
Annual growth: 1.8%
Urban population: 85%
Urban growth: 2%

HEALTH

Life expectancy: 54 years.
Men: 53 years-Women: 55 years
Children per woman: 4.5
Maternal mortality rate: 730 in 100,000 newborns
Infant mortality: 101 every 1,000
Mortality < 5 years old: 126 every 1,000
Calories a day: 2,239 per capita
13 doctors every 100,000 inhabitants
Access to drinking water: 80%

EDUCATION

Literacy: No data
Primary school: 33%. Men: 36%-Women: 29%
Secondary school: 19%. Men: 15%- Women: 22
University: 2%
Primary School teachers: 1 teacher every 34 pupils

COMMUNICATIONS

83 radio sets, 78 TV sets, 14 phone lines every 1,000 inhabitants

ECONOMY

GDP per capita: US\$ 1,993
Annual growth: 3.0%
Annual inflation: 3.0%
Exports: No data
Imports: US\$ 292 million
External debt: US\$ 429 mill.: US\$ 522 per capita
Help received: US\$ 78 mill.; US\$ 110 per capita

LAND

Forests and woodland: 0.3%.
Arable land: 0%. Others: 99.7%

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

Health: 3.3% of GDP
Education: No data
Defence: 4.3% of GDP



LETTER FROM DJIBOUTI

The Americanization of our culture

Ali-Sabieh, August 23, 2008

My name is Mouna Saleh Hassan. I am a senior in High School. In my family there are 9 people, three boys and five girls and my mother. My father died in 2006. My father was an employee at the Bishop's house in the Catholic Mission in Djibouti. He worked 57 years as a carpenter. I am the only one who stayed in the city because of my studies so I will be able to earn my living later on and to help my mother. Now the family lives at Ali-Sabieh, next to the mission of Saint Louis.

The town of Ali-Sabieh is linked to the capital by a railroad and also by a black-topped road. Favorable conditions as well as the beauty of the site allowed the installation of a touristic center, which is very well used.

Our style of life is different from that of westerners and our culture, too. Our culture is made up of songs, poems, stories, legends, dances, games and customs. They come from our original tradition of mostly nomads, warriors, coastal merchants, and drivers of caravans.

As a matter of fact, the inhabitants of our country are not all of the same ancestry. Our culture is rich from several traditions: Somali, Afar, Arab, which reflect a way of life and a common bond in Islam. Foreign cultures are not absent either.

The location of our country, our religions and our history explain that the two official languages are French and Arabic, both of which are taught in schools; besides, French is the language used in teaching. The everyday languages used by almost all of the people of Djibouti are Somali, Afar and Arabic.

Our religion is Moslem. We and the Christians have

Geography: Located in the Afar triangle facing Yemen, it is one of the hottest countries in the world (30 degrees centigrade). A desert, the only vegetation it has is along the region of the basalt mountains in the north of the country. Agriculture, centered in the oases and in some places along the coast, barely covers one-fourth of the local consumption. Nomad shepherds practice cattle raising extensively.

People: The inhabitants of Djibouti are of Somali origin and are divided into two large ethnic groups: the Afar – distributed over the greater part of the land – and the Issa, concentrated in the south and the majority in the capital. There is a presence of French, Yemeni, Ethiopians, Italitns, Greeks, Pakistani, and others.

Religion: Sunni Moslem. There is a small Christian minority which includes Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants (5%).

Languages: Afar (55%), Somali (33%), and the official which are French (2.8%) and Arabic (11%).

Government: Ismail Omar Guellah has been president since 1999, and Dileita Muhammad Dileita the Prime Minister since 2001. Traditionally, the office belongs to the Afar ethnic group, to balance the fact that Guellah belongs to the Issa group. The national assembly has 65 members. A constitutional reform in 1992 established the multi-party system.

Mujeres de Djibouti (Foto J. C. Jouault)



Camellos junto al lago Assal (Djibouti)



Djibouti (Foto J. C. Jouault)

HISTORY

Djibouti is a synonym for forgetfulness, desolation, desert. Nobody remembers Djibouti. Perhaps because its boundaries with countries sadly known to the international community for tragedies, wars and famines which have isolated them one or the other time. Djibouti is resigned to not being noticed by anyone. Nobody remembers its terrible droughts, famines and its roads filled with mines from the recent civil war, or its refugee camps. One of the few books that have been written recently about Djibouti says that "according to a saying of the Issa tribe (the ethnic majority in the south of the country and in the capital), even the jackals make a will before entering Djibouti. And when the French colonists established a republic in the arid desert, a jackal died from hunger before their eyes." Even the location of the country, between the continental plates of Africa and Arabia which are slowly drifting apart causes its underpinnings to move with frequent earthquakes so that a chasm separates the desert in two, offering little hope for the future. Nobody knows if Djibouti has even left any record.

Around the third century before Christ immigrants arrived from the Arabic peninsula and established themselves in the north and south of the actual territory of Djibouti. The Afar, also called Danakil, are descendents of these nomadic people. Then the Issa from Somalia expelled the Afar from the north and settled in the coastal regions. In the year 825 A.D. Arab missionaries introduced Islam. The Arabs controlled the commerce of the region until the 16th century when the Portuguese arrived to bring competition. In 1862, Tadjoura, one of the sultans on the coast of Somali, sold the port of Obock and the adjacent lands to France for 52,000 francs.

Little by little the French presence became more and more predominant, and in 1945, just after the end of World War II, French Somalia (which was the region of Djibouti controlled by the French) was declared a French Overseas Territory. The tensions between the local tribes and the French produced outbreaks of violence and led to the withdrawal of the French in 1977, the date of independence and in which a new state was born with Hassan Gouled as president, helped by a considerable presence of French troops. Since 1991 Gouled has faced an armed rebellion by the Afar, organized into the Front for the Restoration of Democratic Unity (FRUD). Since then, and after two years of largely successful rebellion, there has been a series of important military defeats against the FRUD. These defeats have created serious divisions between the Afar groups, and in 1994 one of the factions signed a cease fire with the government incorporating members of the FRUD into the leadership of the armed forces and even the government itself.

Ethiopia and Somalia, neighbours to Djibouti, have territorial aspirations against the country. Ethiopia's interest is basically geopolitical. When Eritrea gained its independence, Ethiopia became a country without access to the sea. For Somalia, the question is above all one of historic vindication, part of its desire of reunifying the Somali nation.

In April of 2005, the FAO made an urgent call to the international community asking for 7.5 million dollars to combat the serious food crisis the country was experiencing, intensified by a drought caused by three years without rain. Djibouti, meanwhile, fights in agony and silence in order to survive.

LETTER FROM DJIBOUTI

different religions, different cultures and a different way of life. Our culture is also different from Western culture, a different way of living and even of thinking.

But thanks to globalization, there has been an exchange of cultures between countries. Cultural globalization corresponds to the emergence of a homogeneous culture, a world culture, made up of contributions from different national cultures. But because of the dominance of the Western world, cultural uniformity means, most often, the Westernizing of the culture and, more exactly, the Americanization of the world; in other words the worldwide diffusion of American culture. Speaking of cultural uniformity may also concern products, practices, ways of life, tastes, norms, and values. In many countries and even in Developing Countries, borders are opened to a Westernization of the culture, regarding consumption: in alimentation (coca cola), in dress (jeans), in music, and in movies. In these last years, one sees that even Djibouti has been Americanized. The people of Djibouti wear the same clothes as the Americans and we also have the same Western dishes like pizza. In the city of Djibouti is almost Americanized.

Mouna Saleh Hassan

Mouna Saleh Hassan lives in the "Lion's Hand" district of Ali-Sabieh, Djibouti.

Excerpt from **Cartas del Sur al Norte** (Letters from the South to the North), PPC, Madrid 2009

GOD ALSO WRITES

Cultural colonisations have been ongoing in the History of Humankind. Jesus' Good News help us distinguish between colonisation and evangelization.

"Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and that all should give up their particular customs. All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion." (1M 1: 41-43a)

"But now in Christ Jesus you who at one time were far off are made near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made the two into one, and by whom the middle wall of division has been broken down. And he came preaching peace to you who were far off, and to those who were near." (Ef 2: 13-14.17)

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO WRITE

What do you think of Mouna's letter? You can reply to her (in French) through Djibouti's Bishopric
Mouna Saleh Hasan (Ali Sabieh)
Evêché B.P. 94, Djibouti

Lent 40 days with the last 40

www.last40.marianistas.org

In collaboration with
www.guiadelmundo.org.uy

Monday, 30th March 2009

KENYA

HDI = 0.521



Population: 36,012.332 h.

Area: 569,140 Km²

Capital: Nairobi

STATISTICS

DEMOGRAPHY

Population: 36,012,332

Annual growth: 2.4%

Urban population: 44%

Urban growth: 5.3%

HEALTH

Life expectancy: 50 years.

Men: 51 years-Women: 49 years

Children per woman: 5.0

Maternal mortality rate:

1,000 in 100,000 newborns

Infant mortality: 79 every 1,000

Mortality < 5 years old: 120 every 1,000

Calories a day: 2,155 per capita

Access to drinking water: 62%

EDUCATION

Literacy: 74%. Men: 78%- Women: 70%

Primary school: 76%. Men: 76%-Women: 77%

Secondary school,

University: No data

Primary School teachers: 1 teacher every 40 pupils

COMMUNICATIONS

8.3 newspapers, 221 radio sets, 26 TV sets, 9 phone lines every 1,000 inhabitants

ECONOMY

Population living with less than 1 US\$ a day: 22.8%

GDP per capita: US\$ 1,140

Annual growth: 4.3%

Annual inflation: 6.9%

Exports: US\$ 4,202 million

Imports: US\$ 5,115 million

External debt: US\$ 6,826 mill.:

US\$ 190 per capita

Debt Servicing: 8.6% from exports

Help received: US\$ 484 mill.:

US\$ 15 per capita; 3.4% of GDP

LAND

Forests and woodland: 6.2%.

Arable land: 8.2%. Others: 84.6%

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

Health: 2.2% of GDP

Education: 7.0% of GDP

Defence: 1.6% of GDP

Geography: The country lacks ethnic and geographic uniformity. Four principal regions can be distinguished from east to west: the coastal plain with regular rain and tropical vegetation; a small interior belt scarcely populated and with little rain in the north and northeast; the mountainous zone linked to the eastern margin of the Great Rift Valley, with a moderate climate because of the altitude and volcanic soil good for agriculture with most of the population and economic activity; the western-most area has a dry, savanna-covered plateau, though part of it benefits from the moderating influence of Lake Victoria. Among the greatest environmental problems are the depletion of soils, erosion, dry spells, deforestation, the contamination of potable water, mainly around the large cities like Nairobi and Mombasa.

People: The Kenyans come from these principal African ethnic roots: Bantus, Nilocamitics, Sudanese and Kushites. The most significant groups numerically and culturally are the Kikuyus and Luos. Among other ethnic groups are the Baluya, Kamba, Meru, Kissi and Embu. There are Indian and Arab minorities.

Religion: Christians, 73%; traditional religions, 20%; Muslims 6%.

Languages: English and Swahili are the official languages. In addition, more than 50 languages are spoken, among them Kikuyu and Kamba.



LETTER FROM KENYA

Come and you will find a different world

Nairobi, June 2008

Greetings from Kenya. My name is Tiyan Joseph. I am 21 years old, 5.8 feet tall, dark and shiny skinned with dark coloured teeth. I belong to a pastoralist community, by the name Pökot. It is located in North West part of Kenya. The community is known for its hospitality. Its economic activities are pastoralism and subsistence farming. We keep cows, goats and sheep. Our main food is milk, blood and meat and porridge seldom.

I come from a polygamous family. My own mum passed away in 1993, when I was in Standard Three. She left us four, a girl and three boys. The last born who was sucking by then passed away in 1995. Our third born was killed by savage Karamoja warriors, a neighbouring tribe on the side of Uganda on 2006 as he was herding cattle. My dad is a pastoralist. Like my mum he too never went to school.

I am a continuing student at Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Nairobi, taking Bachelor of commerce. This is my first year of study. My ambition and goal is to assist the Pastoralists to market their livestock. Among my community livestock trade is practised, however, due to poor market information for livestock sellers, the livestock are sold at a throwaway price. Similarly I can assist in teaching our schools which are understaffed. On the other hand I can mobilize and sensitize the community on the values of education, since the region has a population which is 95% illiterate..

It is my pleasure an honour to invite each of every willing Spaniard to visit Kenya. Come and witness for yourself how life is different in this part of the world. Start from touring its cities to the towns and let that not be the end of your



Constructor de canoa. Isla Lamu (Kenia)



Cataratas Victoria (Kenia)



Familia Masai (Kenia)

HISTORY

On the eastern plains of Kenya, near the coasts of the Indian Ocean, there was in all probability an earthly paradise. And it is in this region of Africa where Homo habilis, the great-great-grandfather of Homo sapiens, made his first steps more than three million years ago. To think of Kenya is to imagine the endless landscapes of the movie "African Memories", the incredible reports of the annual migration of the grass-eating animals of the Masai Mara, or the marvels of Lake Victoria. But the reality of Kenya has little to do with the idyllic vision of a documentary about the savage life of the savanna.

Of the 34 million people in the country, 23% live on less than a dollar a day and the average income is 460 dollars, fifty times less than that in Spain. And what is worse, the country is in recession. Kenya has become poorer by 0.6% a year since 1990. In 1995 the total primary school population was 95% and has dropped to 76% in the last fifteen years, and the life expectancy from 59 to 48 years.

AIDS is one of the causes of this vital step backwards: there are more than 1,200,000 sick, and 650,000 children who have lost one or both of their parents through it, and 50% of the hospital beds are occupied by persons infected with HIV.

The history of Kenya, the cradle of humanity, is the history of a fertile land wantonly exploited first by the colonial powers, and by a corrupt political regime afterwards. In 1890, when the British colonial government built the railroad between Uganda and Mombasa, the door was opened for thousands of European colonists to come in and simply expel the natives from the best lands. As in the rest of Africa, the independence movement was not important until the end of the Second World War. Jomo Kenyatta, leader of the KANU, the National African Union of Kenya, achieved independence in December of 1964.

During the next 24 years, Kenyatta governed the country by corruption and authoritarianism. At his death in 1978, his right hand man, Daniel Arap Moi, took over and intensified the political repression, making all opposition parties illegal and establishing a regime of one party in 1982.

Moi governed the country for another 24 years, so that during the first 48 years of independence Kenya had only two presidents. Finally, in December of 2002, Mwai Kibaki, leader of the National Rainbow Coalition won the presidential elections, defeating the official candidate by a surprising 63% of the votes. But once again, the expectations for change were deceived by indefinitely postponing the making of a more democratic constitution.

The recent years have been bad for the country. In 2000, Kenya suffered the worse drought of the beginning century, and in 2003 the price of coffee, the principal income from exports, fell to the lowest level in history. It was the ruin of the majority of small producers who added to 40% of the unemployed already in the country before the crisis.

Perhaps one of the pieces of good news that the country has received is the awarding in 2004 of the Nobel Peace Prize to Wangari Maathai, an environmental activist and defender of human rights, the first African woman to win this honour..

LETTER FROM KENYA

tour. Venture into the up country and you will encounter a different world. In these places will see our life style ranging from the distance travelled to reach the nearest water point, the nature of the road infrastructure, the health facilities, water sanitation and not forgetting education facilities. I assure you that you will not like the experience. After all this experience then you may visit the game parks and other very wonderful sites.

My dear friend if you have never seen a person living by a cup of porridge a day this are the places for you to tour.

If I were a Spaniard I would give a fraction of my earning to charitable organizations helping the less fortunate. I would never give it to the hands of a politician, because it will be like I have given to him to help his campaign. They do no good to the community, but the great gift is to lie to the poor people and that is what they rejoice at. How is the case with your politicians? Are they the same? I doubt.

We do blame the developed countries that they are not charitable, not concerned and being selfish but I came to realize that was not the case but it is because no one has given the real situation of the life in the developing countries. It is hard to believe this but that is the reality. So my friend count yourself lucky to be Spaniard.

Tiyan Joseph

Fr. Tomás Herreros is a witness of the merit and tenacity that some youngsters have demonstrated in accessing University education, among which is the author of this letter. This is even more striking for the fact that they come from a shepherds' background.

Excerpt from **Cartas del Sur al Norte** (Letters from the South to the North), PPC, Madrid 2009

GOD ALSO WRITES

God's Spirit gives us impulse to proclaim and welcome the Good News, which arrives to us from all around the world.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
(Lc 4: 18-19)

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO WRITE

Joseph Tiyan (joseph_tiyan@yahoo.com) needs a hand to improve his trading project for his livestock of the Pokot communit.

John Losur (losurons@yahoo.com), whose letter is published on the campaign's website, works for Joseph. Both are longing to get in contact with you and write to each other.

Lent 40 days with the last 40

www.last40.marianistas.org

In collaboration with
www.guiadelmundo.org.uy

Tuesday March 31, 2009

SUDAN

HDI = 0.526



Population: 37,792.985 h.
Area: 2,376,000 Km²
Capital: Jartum (Al-Khartum)

Geography: Sudan, the largest country in Africa, is divided into three natural regions: the deserts of Libya, the Sahara and Nubia in the north; the central plains; and the tropical forests in the south. The majority of the population is settled along the banks of the Nile (Nahr-an-Nil) and cultivates cotton. All of the outgoing commercial traffic is centered in Port Sudan (Bur Sudan) on the Red Sea. About 60% of the land is affected by encroaching barrenness. Industrial waste has contaminated coasts and some rivers.

People: The ethnic composition of the Sudanese people is extremely complex. It is made up of more than 570 groups among whom are those of Arab descent. These reside basically in the center and north of the country, together with the Nubians, and make up almost half of the population. The Black ethnic groups predominate in the south where there are close to 400,000 refugees from neighbouring countries (Chad, Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea).

Religion: Islam (official) is predominant among the Arabs and Nubians, with the majority being Sunis. The traditional African cults are mostly in the south, and there are Christian communities in both regions.

Languages: Arabic (official and the main one). The ethnic groups use their own languages which make up more than one hundred.



STATISTICS

DEMOGRAPHY

Population: 37,792,985
Annual growth: 21.9%
Urban population: 43%
Urban growth: 4.3%

HEALTH

Life expectancy: 57 years.
Men: 56 years-Women: 58 years
Children per woman: 4
Maternal mortality rate: 590 in 100,000 newborns
Infant mortality: 63 every 1,000
Mortality < 5 years old: 91 every 1,000
Calories a day: 2,260 per capita
9 doctors every 100,000 inhabitants
Access to drinking water: 69%

EDUCATION

Literacy: 59%. Men: 69%- Women: 50%
Primary school: 43%. Men: 47%-Women: 39%
Secondary school: No data
University: 6%
Primary School teachers: 1 teacher every 29 pupils

COMMUNICATIONS

26 newspapers, 461 radio sets, 386 TV sets, 29 phone lines every 1,000 inhabitants

ECONOMY

GDP per capita: US\$ 1,949
Annual growth: 6.0%
Annual inflation: 10.6%
Exports: US\$ 3,822 million
Imports: US\$ 4,651 million
External debt: US\$ 19,332 mill.: US\$ 512 per capita
Debt Servicing: 6.0% from exports
Help received: US\$ 621 mill.; US\$ 19 per capita

LAND

Forests and woodland: 28.4%. Arable land: 7.2%. Others: 64.2%

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

Health: 1.0% of GDP
Education: No data
Defence: 2.2% of GDP

LETTER FROM SUDAN

Not a fellow African helped me but the Europeans gave me the support

I am Esther Jamba a Sudanese by nationality. It's painful to remember the past but I have to tell. I suffered during my childhood simply because my father died left me in mother's womb, mother abundant me to my Aunt in the age of 2 years and re-married.

When joined primary, from P.1 - P.4 Aunt was able because payment was not high compared to now and sometimes she could pay in kind. Reaching P.5 she told me that marks the end of my education since she wants to concentrate in paying her own children who were ahead of me. I dropped out and remained at home for one year only cooking and washing cloths for those in school.

The following year I told her about school again but the answer to me was no, I insisted by collecting soft broom from the bush and sell in her absence otherwise she will take away the money for feeding.

When I reached P.6 I was able to do heavy work like collecting fire-wood to sell during market days and brewing to enable me to continue with studies. Nobody among the relatives could support me.

In 1991 I got married to a Ugandan, after we had one child the man started mistreating me, saying that am a mere refugee even if my people would ash him for dowry he will never give them anything and even when the child fall sick he does not give money for medication. I could stay for days not cooking but neighbours were helping me with some food, soap etc.

One day I approached the Bishop explaining him my problems and he accepted to sponsor me to TTC (Teachers



Niñas cerca de Nuri (Sudán)



Tocando la tamboura (Sudán)
Foto: A. Bommino



Sudán

HISTORY

Sudan was conquered by the Egyptian Pharaohs in the second millennium B.C. and was given the name Khus. The Arab penetration began in the seventh century. Dominated by Egypt in 1820., military presence was constant until total occupation in 1876. Unification, the introduction of new religious rites, the prohibition of slavery under pressure from the English, and the imposition of taxes created a climate of deep discontent. In 1881 Mohammed Ahmad began a crusade for the preservation of Islam.

The strategic French and British interests in the area ended with the defeat of El Mahdi and recognition by the French of British domination made official in the form of a joint Anglo-Egyptian rule over Sudan in 1899.

In 1956 independence was proclaimed, but five months before a bitter civil war had broken out which lasted sixteen years. At the same time, frontier conflicts with Egypt began, started by the use of the waters of the Nile. From 1958 (after a coup) to 1964 Ibrahim Abboud had a dictatorial government which was not able to stop the separatist attempts of the south.

In 1969 Gaafar al-Nimeiry came to power. With the help of Libya and Egypt he established a personalized government strengthened by the Constitution of 1973 and the creation of the Sudanese Socialist Union as the only party. In 1983, after several re-elections, Nimeiry divided the provinces of the south into smaller regional units and imposed Islamic law on the whole country. This occasioned new disturbances in the south and, since 1983, the country has been immersed in a civil war between the Arab Muslim majority in the north and a Black minority with Christian or Animist beliefs in the south.

On two occasions before 1984, the country was considered in bankruptcy. The droughts of 1985, 1987 and 1988 were followed by a great flooding which devastated the main agricultural regions. After various changes of government and a new coup, in 1989 a military regime was established under el-Bashir. Since 1993, the Sudanese military regime has given some signs of political openness in order to avoid international isolation. In 1996 elections were held and el-Bashir was confirmed in office.

In January of 1998 the United States announced an economic embargo against Sudan stating that it was supporting international terrorism.

In October of 2002, in Kenya, the beginning of negotiations for peace put an end to a civil war which lasted nineteen years and claimed the lives of two million people and left the country in a miserable condition (in 2003 92% of the Sudanese lived below the poverty level). Nevertheless, in January of 2004, while peace had been achieved, the government troops began an offensive in the zone of Darfur in the extreme east of Sudan against the Army of the Liberation Movement of Sudan which had been created in response to systematic attacks in the region of Darfur on the part of Arab shepherds (the janjawid) expelled from Sahel (their place of origin) by land erosion who attempted to drive the Black Islamic tribes from their irrigated lands. According to H.R.W.the janjawid received help from the Sudanese government to carry out their Operation Burned Land. Until March of 2003 it is estimated that 180,000 people had died in the Darfur conflict, and two million had abandoned their villages seeking asylum.

LETTER FROM SUDAN

Training College). After my Admission form was given, the administration asked for marriage certificate or if my husband could come and explain to them confirming that am married to him but he refused, I had to withdraw from the college.

Finally I joined IAC (Institute of Accountancy & Commerce) Arua Branch for years Diploma course in Stenography. After completing my course, I started working with JRS since 1996 November up to date as a secretary and mother of four children.

In my observation, I discovered that JRS is a welcoming organization, gives hospitality, needs a committed persons and tolerance, example in 2001 when my elder brother and his wife died of Aids, JRS individuals were able to support that family through me otherwise I could not manage both families with the salary am earning. Secondly JRS decided to send me for 2 years Diploma course in Business Administration, hopefully after finishing JRS will increase my salary or promote me to do different thing and that was my dream before starting the course.

I wish I were born in Europe, I wouldn't have gone through these sufferings in Sudan and I would be leading soft life and maximum education.

My sincere thanks to the people of the 1st world, as I mentioned earlier, not a relative or a fellow African helped me but the Europeans gave me the support.

My dear friends in Europe/Spanish I would wish you to come and witness things here on ground by yourselves.

Esther Jamba

Excerpt from *Cartas del Sur al Norte* (Letters from the South to the North), PPC, Madrid 2009

GOD ALSO WRITES

Wherever there is a hand open to the brother and an encouraging word, there is always God.

"Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! He will come and save you."
(Is 35: 3-4)

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO WRITE

The Spanish missionary Bishop Miguel Ángel Sebastián is the president of Caritas in Chad. He has coordinated the programs to help the Sudanese at the refugee camps in Chad. Write to him with words of encouragement and hope to be transmitted to the refugees:

*Obispo Miguel Sebastián
B.P. 136 - N'Djaména - Chad
Or by email: unad@intnet.td*

Lent 40 days with the last 40

www.last40.marianistas.org

In collaboration with
www.guiadelmundo.org.uy

Wednesday, April 1, 2009

HAITI

HDI = 0.529



Population: 8,773.138 h.
Area: 27,560 Km²
Capital: Puerto Príncipe

STATISTICS

DEMOGRAPHY

Population: 8,773,138
Annual growth: 1.4%
Urban population: 40%
Urban growth: 3.1%

HEALTH

Life expectancy: 53 years.
Men: 53 years-Women: 54 years
Children per woman: 3.6
Maternal mortality rate: 680 in 100,000 newborns
Infant mortality: 74 every 1,000
Mortality < 5 years old: 117 every 1,000
Calories a day: 2,109 per capita
17 doctors every 100,000 inhabitants
Access to drinking water: 71%

EDUCATION

Literacy: 52%. Men: 53%-Women: 50%
Primary school, Secondary school, University: No data

COMMUNICATIONS

18 radio sets, 60 TV sets, 17 phone lines every 1,000 inhabitants

ECONOMY

Population living with less than 1 US\$ a day: 53.9%
GDP per capita: US\$ 1,844
Annual growth: 0.4%
Annual inflation: 27%
Exports: US\$ 469 million
Imports: US\$ 1,375 million
External debt: US\$ 1,225 mill.: US\$ 140 per capita
Debt Servicing: 4% from exports

LAND

Forests and woodland: 3.8%.
Arable land: 28.3%.
Others: 56.3%

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

Health: 3.0% of GDP
Education: No data
Defence: No data

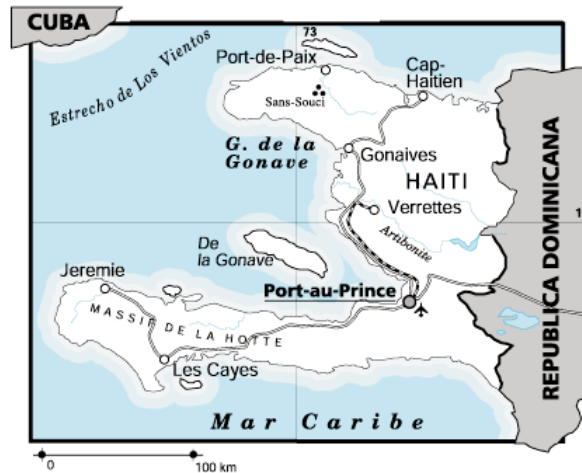
Geography: Occupies the western side of the island of Hispaniola, the second in size of the Greater Antilles. There are two mountain chains running east to west, dividing the northern and southern peninsulas. Coffee is the principal export. Copper was not mined after 1976, and bauxite is about exhausted. The northern coast receives more rain and is the more developed region, but the land suffers from serious erosion. Less than 2% of the territory is still forested.

People: The great majority of Haitians – almost 95% – are descendents of Africans. The rest are European Mestizos and there is a small number of European and Asian origin. Thousands of Haitians have left the country in recent years, emigrating especially to Colombia, Venezuela and the United States.

Religion: Voodoo, syncretism and Christianity, and African, Catholic (80%), and Protestant (16%) beliefs.

Languages: French (official), spoken by less than 20% of the population. The majority speak Creole (also official), a local language with African, Spanish and English elements, besides the original French.

Social organizations: Groups of the Basic Church, originally Catholic; the Movement in Favor of the Creole Language; Solidarity for the Haitian Woman (SOFA) which has 5,000 members; the Confederation of Haitian Workers; the Federation of Haitian Unions; the Movement of the Papaya growers.



LETTER FROM HAITI

We are morally and mentally poor

Delmas, 2nd October 2007

I am Michel Rose Flore 26 years of age. I live with my parents. I am Haitian and I am studying chemistry. I am passing into the second year. I have a sister and a brother and I am the oldest. I belong to the choir at St. Martin of Tours Parish in Delmas 5. I love to sing and listen to music, watch television, films. I hope to found my family and also to find work at the end of my formation and become a chemist renowned and sought after.

Let me present my country to you briefly. Haiti is a poor country that cannot take care of the needs of its population. One of the seven countries least advanced in the world with a feeble national production. Life expectancy is 54 on an average. Haiti depends on international aid to survive. Haiti lacks industry and the appropriate technology hinders the industrial sector to develop. Haiti lacks economic means. The lack of infrastructure (roads and bridges) hinders considerably the functioning of existing industries. This situation does not encourage foreign and national investors to invest in Haiti.

On the agricultural level, it must be noted that in Haiti the agricultural sector occupies 65% of the active population. However, for more than 10 years it has been constantly abandoned. It has been dominated by subsistence farming which occupies 75% of the cultivated land and still practiced with the hoe. So the intense work of the country is numerous but isolated on small parcels of land, without any technical means or financial aid and cannot furnish enough food for the population. This situation gets worse every year because of the high birth



HISTORY

Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, is on the western side of the island of Hispaniola, named by Christopher Columbus, although the original inhabitants of the island – Arawaks and Tainos, none of whom exist today – called it Quisqueya.

In 1697 Spain ceded half of the island to France which began to send a huge number of African slaves, which led to only 16% of the population being free (480,000 slaves out of a population of 560,000).

At the beginning of the 19th century the country declared itself independent, taking advantage of the discontent of the slaves and Mulattos. But soon the upper class that led the liberation movement imposed an even more repressive regime.

The 19th century is marked by movements of extreme violence, and even though there was a certain prosperity with the arrival of foreign investors (U.S.A.) with the creation of infrastructures of transportation and large plantations of sugar and coffee, it was soon evident that the results of these efforts were leaving the country.

In 1867 Haiti underwent a bloody civil war which lasted until 1915 when U.S. troops occupied the national territory turning the country into a colony of the powerful “ally”. This situation lasted until 1934.

The great Haitian figure of the 20th century is Duvalier, a middle class doctor who, helped by the United States army, assumed dictatorial power in 1957. The people gave him the nickname of “Papa Doc”. He declared himself lifetime president of the Republic. The two pillars which were the base of his reign of terror were voodoo and the Tonton-Macoutes, his national security guards.

Duvalier’s son, Jean Claude, succeeded him in 1971, with the nickname “Baby Doc”. In 1985, the 40,000 assassinations committed during his regime led to a wave of popular riots and protests which ended with the dictator exiled to France under the protection of North America.

In the five following years, a series of revolts took place until in 1990 democratic elections were held, giving the presidency to a Salesian priest, Jean Bertrand Aristide. Nevertheless, on September 30, 1991, a military revolt took place led by Raoul Cedras.

After the intervention of the OAS and the UN, the return of the president took place in 1993. Nevertheless, the upscaling of violence in Haiti was brutal, which led to a naval blockade imposed by the Security Council of the UN which destroys the economy of the country and leaves 80% of the population in the shadows of poverty.

After a couple of presidents allied with Aristide, he won the elections again in 2001 in an electoral process without guarantees.

In 2002, the resources of Haiti were in the hands of 15% of the population, and 73% were living in extreme poverty. In addition, the government of Aristide revived the suppression of journalists with at least 30 deaths.

On January 1, 2004, coinciding with the second centenary of independence of the country, there was a total strike which ended with the military occupation of the country by the United States and the exile of the president. In May and September there were terrible floods with thousands of deaths.

At the present time there is a situation of complete violence and insecurity, and the number of poor persons is even more than in 2002.

LETTER FROM HAITI

rate which renews the Haitian population much too fast.

The painful life of the Haitians, the lack of doctors and nurses, the unhealthy conditions, the lack of hospitals and medications reduce the length of life of the Haitians. Almost half of the population does not have access to health care. Besides, epidemics regularly strike the population already weakened by malnutrition.

In most of the least advanced countries, schools and qualified teachers are lacking. Besides, parents often out of work do not have the means to pay the school fees or to buy the uniforms, books and school materials. They cannot even count on help from the government. In these conditions, the P M A has illiterate people. In Haiti, the alphabetizing rate is 55%. Haiti also lacks qualified technicians in the areas susceptible of bettering its economy and obtaining a better quality of life for its inhabitants. (Engineers, agronomists, Teachers, qualified workers, health care workers.)

The challenges are great, the weight of the past, and also infant mortality, the lack of public hospitals, schools, places to take in abandoned children, lack of professional teachers; the lack of electricity and drinking water and the lack of security must be noted.

Michel Rose Flore

Michel Rose-Flore was born in 1981 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Excerpt from **Cartas del Sur al Norte** (Letters from the South to the North), PPC, Madrid 2009

GOD ALSO WRITES

God always listens to the sincere hearts.

“Blessed art thou, O Lord God of our fathers. For thou art righteous in all the things that thou hast done to us. For we have sinned and committed iniquity, departing from thee. For we, O Lord, are become less than any nation, and be kept under this day in all the world because of our sins. Put us not to shame: but deal with us after thy lovingkindness, and according to the multitude of thy mercies.”

(Dn 3: 26.27.29.37.41-42)

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO WRITE

You can write to Michel Rose Flore at the following address:

*Delmas 29 - Angle Rue A. Killick/Delmas 29
Port-au-Prince - Haiti - WI.*

Alternatively, you can write to him through the email address of Stanislas Limdeyou SM

(stanislasl@hotmail.com). They both speak French.

Thursday April 2, 2009

PAPUA-NEUEVA GUINEA

HDI =0.530



Population: 6,458.059 h.
Area: 462,840 Km²
Capital: Port Moresby

STATISTICS

DEMOGRAPHY

Population: 6,458,059
Annual growth: 2.6%
Urban population: 14%
Urban growth: 2.9%

HEALTH

Life expectancy: 57 years.
Men: 55 years-Women: 60 years
Children per woman: 3.8
Maternal mortality rate: 300 in 100,000 newborns
Infant mortality: 55 every 1,000
Mortality < 5 years old: 74 every 1,000
5 doctors every 100,000 inhabitants
Access to drinking water: 39%

EDUCATION

Literacy: 57%. Men: 63%- Women: 51%
University: 2%
Primary School teachers: 1 teacher every 35 pupils

COMMUNICATIONS

83 radio sets, 35 TV sets,
23.1 phone lines every 1,000 inhabitants

ECONOMY

GDP per capita: US\$ 2,563
Annual growth: 3.3%
Annual inflation: 1.7%
Exports: US\$ 1,332 million
Imports: US\$ 1,611 million
External debt: US\$ 1,849 mill.: US\$ 305 per capita
Debt Servicing: 10.8% from exports
Help received: US\$ 266 mill.; US\$ 46 per capita; 6.8% of GDP
Unemployment: 3% of economically active population
Women: 48% of economically active population

LAND

Forests and woodland: 65%.
Arable land: 0.5%. Others: 1.4%

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

Health: 3% of GDP
Defence: 0.5% of GDP



LETTER FROM PAPUA-NEW GUINEA

When tradition enslaves women

18 June 2008

To our dear Spanish brothers and sisters,
Hello and good day to you all and best wishes from me to you: from the Land of the Unexpected – Papua New Guinea (PNG).

My name is Charles K. Ori. I am married with two kids who are still schooling. My wife Rose, works with the Servants of St. Joseph Sisters as a Trainer and collaborator in Basic Cooking in their Skills Training Program at Talleres de Nazaret Training Centre catering to the unemployed, unskilled, and underprivileged women and out of school youth coming from the different settlements of Port Moresby. I am a baker in a supermarket, earning a very minimal salary hardly enough to help maintain a dignified way of life. I am so grateful that my wife is working so that together we help one another in facilitating the possibility for our children to go school and hopefully to be able to finish their studies for their future.

Even if we are living in a settlement, a place deprived of electricity and water, I am hoping that someday, I will be able to experience having a house of my own with all the needed facilities to live a decent and dignified life.

Many of our people did not have the opportunity to go to school especially women. In our culture, women are considered second rate citizen, no voice and always at the service of the man in the family. We call this tradition. We have rituals and traditional practices which we value but we have also traditions that many times enslave us too. This is very evident in the situation of women in our society.

Many of us live in settlements, there are many street children. I believe the cause all these is the lack of

Geography: Located to the east of Indonesia, just south of the equator, the country includes the eastern portion of the island of New Guinea and a number of smaller islands: New Britain, New Ireland and Manus, in the Bismarck Archipelago; Bougainville, Buka and Nissau, comprising the northern part of the Solomon Islands; the archipelagos of Luisi and D'Entrecasteaux and Trobriand Islands / Kiriwina and Woodlark, southeast of New Guinea.

The area's topography, of volcanic origin, is mountainous, except for the narrow coastal plains. The country suffers from indiscriminate deforestation by logging in large areas.

People: Papuans, 84%; Melanesians, 15%.

Religion: Protestant (58.4%), Catholics (32.8%), Anglican (5.4%), traditional beliefs (2.5%), Baha'i (0.6%), other (0.3 %).

Languages: English (official), pidgin-local dialect derived from English-and more than 700 local languages.



HISTORY

Located east of the Malay Archipelago, the island of New Guinea was occupied as early as 50 thousand years ago by Melanesians. This, the second largest island in the world, provides abundant geographical features. The climate is tropical with abundant rainfall. The population, which has been traditionally scattered and isolated, has developed hundreds of dialects.

Jorge de Meneses, the Portuguese explorer, who discovered New Guinea in 1526, called the area "two Papuan Islands" and the Spanish mariner, Íñigo Ortiz de Retes, added "New Guinea", because its inhabitants resembled the people of Guinea .

In the 19th century title to the island was disputed by the Dutch, Germans and British. In settlement they divided the area into quadrants. In the wake of World War I and II, Australia took control of the German and English sectors and gave the new entity the name of the Territory of Papua New Guinea. The Netherlands controlled the western part, Irian Barat, until its annexation by Indonesia in 1969.

In 1971, the eastern territory was officially renamed Papua New Guinea. In 1975 the area achieved independence under the leadership of Michael Somare, who had won the first elections three years earlier.

From the time of its independence the country has faced a series of secessionist movements. Relations with Indonesia, which occupies the western part of the island, have been conflict-ridden. The Free Papua Movement operates there. In 1984, twelve thousand people of that province took refuge in Papua New Guinea. Many still remain in the area.

Mining generates more than half of all export earnings. Together with oil, it is the key element in the country's economy.

In 1989, the secessionist dispute on the island of Bougainville took on a military dimension. The island had gold and copper deposits which were under Australian control. As the conflict intensified, troops were dispatched to the area and in 1991 the death penalty was reintroduced. In 1996 Theodore Miriung, an advocate of a peace agreement, was assassinated. In early 1997, Prime Minister Chan resigned from his position after having recruited mercenaries to fight against the secessionists. Later in 1997 the government and rebels reached a cease-fire agreement, which included a demilitarization of the area and a request for a presence of UN troops. Australia promised funds for reconstruction. In the nine years of strife, 20 thousand people had died.

The political system had been a problem from the beginning. Formally the government was comprised of a monarchy with a democratic parliament. However, the fragmented and weak nature of the political parties led to repeated votes of no-confidence in the unicameral parliament. In eleven years there were five Prime Ministers.

In 1999, Prime Minister Bill Skate was deposed for having sought to borrow 2.5 billion dollars from Taiwan. He was replaced by Mekele Morauta, who began applying for loans from the World Bank and the IMF, a move that caused friction with China. He was the first Prime Minister to complete his term of office.

The general elections of 2002 brought Michael Somare to power for the third time. The objectives of his new government included urgent action against poverty, chronic unemployment and widespread criminality.

LETTER FROM PAPUA-NEW GUINEA

education for the people and unemployment. Many women and out of school youth are idle.

I just admire you people in Spain and other first world countries for your creativity to make your country a progressive country – a first world country. How did you get your wealth? How did you improve the quality of your life? But at the same time, are you happy enjoying your life and yet in the third world countries, many are starving, many are ignorant, many are homeless, many are still primitive. I feel sorry for you because you do not see and feel the misery of the people like us in a third world country. Can you open your eyes, your minds, your hearts and your ears to us? Why don't you widen your horizon? Can you help us improve the quality of our life? Come see our life, our treasures, our miseries... and open your hearts...open your ears...open your hands...

Thank you for reading my letter.

Yours sincerely

Charles Ori

Charles Ori, is the husband of one of our trainer here in our training centre. He si working as a baker in a supermarket bakery. They live in a settlement - equivalent to a squatter area. They have no water and light there in their house. They have to fetch their water from a neighbourhood for their cooking, washing of their clothes and bath. Sometimes Rose, his wife washes their clothes here. Since they live in a squatter area, they have no mailbox so I put our mail address since his wife is working with us. (Sisters Servants of St Joseph)

Excerpt from **Cartas del Sur al Norte** (Letters from the South to the North), PPC, Madrid 2009

GOD ALSO WRITES

God writes His Word which brings the Good News that go beyond frontiers and any human division.

"I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not wait." (Is 46: 12)

"For you are all children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Ga 3: 26.28)

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO WRITE

Reply to Charles through Sr. Elma Tuzon, of the Servants of St. Joseph community. Please state in the envelope that the letter is addressed to Charles Ori. Write preferably in English or Spanish. Tell him about any situation in which women are still "slaves of tradition".

Elma Tuzon (Charles Ori)

P.O. Box 576, Boroko - NCD. Papua New Guinea

Friday, April 3, 2009

CAMEROON

HDI = 0.532



Population: 16,874.394 h.

Area: 465,400 Km²

Capital: Yaoundé

Geography: The country is divided into three regions: the northern savanna grasslands in the basin of Lake Chad, where cattle raising takes place and corn, cotton and peanuts are cultivated; the center, of humid plains; and the south with rich, volcanic soil with the cultivation and exportation of coffee, bananas, cocoa, and cotton. Drought and dust bowl effect are the major concerns in the northern region which is 25% of the territory, and where more than one quarter of the total population lives.

People: There are 250 ethnic groups. Those of Bantu origin predominate in the south, while in the north the largest groups are the Doualas, Bamilekés, Tikar and Bamauna. The Eondos and Fulbes are mostly in the east, and the Fulanis in the north [south?] In the southeast are the Bakas Pygmies who live by hunting and fishing.

Religion: Half of the population practices traditional cults. Christians predominate in the south and Muslims in the north.

Languages: French and English are official. Various native languages are spoken (more than 200. the main ones being Beti and Bulu), as well as German.

Social organizations: In 1971, the government banned the Workers Central of Cameroon, heir to the syndicate movement of the previous century. In the English-speaking part of Cameroon there is a separatist movement of notable importance.



STATISTICS

DEMOGRAPHY

Population: 16,874,394

Annual growth: 1.7%

Urban population: 54%

Urban growth: 3%

HEALTH

Life expectancy: 46 years.

Men: 46 years-Women: 47 years

Children per woman: 4.1

Maternal mortality rate: 730 in 100,000 newborns

Infant mortality: 87 every 1,000

Mortality < 5 years old: 149 every 1,000

Calories a day: 2,286 per capita

7 doctors every 100,000 inhabitants

Access to drinking water: 63%

EDUCATION

Literacy: 68%. Men: 77%- Women: 60%

Primary school, Secondary school: No data

University: 5%

Primary School teachers: 1 teacher every 53 pupils

COMMUNICATIONS

6.3 newspapers, 161 radio sets, 75 TV sets, 7 phone lines every 1,000 inhabitants

ECONOMY

Population living with less than 1 US\$ a day: 17.1%

GDP per capita: US\$ 2,174

Annual growth: 4.3%

Annual inflation: 0.4%

Exports: No data

Imports: US\$ 1,608 million

External debt: US\$ 9,496 mill.:

US\$ 563 per capita

Help received: US\$ 884 mill; US\$ 55 per capita

LAND

Forests and woodland:

45.6%. Arable land:

12.8%. Others: 39.0%

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

Health: 1.2% of GDP

Education: 3.8% of GDP

LETTER FROM CAMEROON

Africa is a kind of "dumping ground" for European countries

Yaoundé, May 30, 2008

I was born in Cameroon and am 33 years old, single and with no gainful employ. I live in the city of Yaoundé, which is the political capital of my country; I have a level of studies equivalent to a High School Diploma plus three years of higher studies and I practice the Catholic religion.

I am the second oldest in a family of 7 children. My father was a mechanic and my mother a teacher. After I obtained my DUT (University Diploma in Technology), I was forced to join the ranks of small tradespeople because I was not able to find work in the technical area or to continue my studies to specialize in my field. I work for the owner of a second-hand store selling used kitchen appliances from Europe. My salary is not much; I am unable to find a better job and my hope of being hired for a government job or by a better business is slowly diminishing.

My experience in the second-hand store has allowed me to realize bitterly that, whatever else is said, Africa has become a kind of "dumping ground" for European countries. As a matter of fact, we sell second-hand appliances, already used and worn out by Westerners, who ask nothing better than to throw them out with the junk. You have no idea how flourishing this business is in our country! People prefer these appliances because, as a matter of fact, they are of better quality than new products made in and imported from Asia, which are of inferior quality. I think the West should cease exporting to Africa only products (I mean new ones) of lesser quality, for,



HISTORY

Cameroon, cradle of the Bantus who were already there in the second century B.C., began its expansion toward the south and east, spreading new crops and iron work. Its name comes from the first contacts with the Europeans in the XV century (when Ferdinand Poo arrived and found a river in which there were many shrimps. Until the XIX century relations with Europe were limited to small commercial exchanges in the coastal zones.

The colonial period began when, after the Berlin Conference (1884), Cameroon was given to Germany. From the beginning there were important conflicts because the Germans wanted to control the commerce between the coast and the interior villages which, up to that time, had been controlled by the Doualas. On the other hand, appropriated the most fertile lands, and even though up to that time there had never been food problems, hunger appeared causing the death of thousands of people..

After the first World War, the German territories in Africa were reassigned, England taking the north of Cameroon and France the rest (75%). Almost immediately popular movements in favour of independence began. In 1945 the Peoples Union of Cameroon was created. When it was outlawed in 1956, the leaders fled, organizing an autonomous government. When independence was granted in 1960, Ahidjo, a leader of the UNC, was put in charge of the government and began a repressive regime which filled the prisons with political prisoners. When he left power in 1982, he was substituted by his prime minister Paul Biya who has been president since then and who has maintained the same political and economic platforms.

The economic base for the greater part of the population was the cultivation of coffee, rubber and cotton, but since the exportation was controlled by French enterprises, when prices were lowered in the decade of the 80's the people were forced to accept the prices imposed by the inter-national community. To compensate for the loss and to be able to pay the External Debt, the Government, with the help of the World Bank and the FMI, readjusted the basic structure with the privatization of businesses and the reduction of imports and costs to the State. The devaluation of the franc disrupted Cameroon society. In the decade of 1990 political corruption and inefficiency of the tribunals were so great that sectors of the population began taking justice into their own hands and even beat to death suspects of small robberies.

The greatest problem that Cameroon has now is corruption. In 1999 the NGO International Transparency indicated this country as the 2nd most corrupt in the world.

According to official data, the debt surpassed 2,900 millions of dollars in 1983 and 8,500 millions in 2004. Hunger can be added to the list of evils, above all in the extreme north one of the poorest regions of the country, and more than a million people need critical help.

LETTER FROM CAMEROON

although we are poor, we should be offered (for the few people who can afford them) products of better quality. For example, we realize from what people who travel in Europe say, the alimentary products shipped to us are not the same as what the people eat in Europe. We can easily think that factories make products uniquely for Africa; but if Man is the same everywhere, one wonders why.

However, my reproach should not discourage any Europeans wishing to come here for vacation or to discover this country which is so very beautiful, very rich and full of possibilities. We have sun more than half of the year, very beautiful tourist sites which have preserved all their wild character, luxuriant and varied vegetation, and the forests are still full of wonderful animals. I am sure I don't need to talk any more about this to convince an adventurous soul.

With that, I leave you, hoping that this letter will be useful for your purpose which I find very praiseworthy.

YOUMBI SADO, Rodrigue

Excerpt from *Cartas del Sur al Norte* (Letters from the South to the North), PPC, Madrid 2009

GOD ALSO WRITES

Through God's Word we learn the three degrees of donation: First, give what we don't need; Second, give from what we need; Third, give oneself.

"He looked up, and saw the rich people who were putting their gifts into the treasury. He saw a certain poor widow casting in two small brass coins. He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow put in more than all of them, for all these put in gifts for God from their abundance, but she, out of her poverty, put in all that she had to live on."
(Lc 21: 1-4)

"I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me."
(Ga 2: 20)

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be given to you." (Lc 6: 38a)

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO WRITE

Imagine the many things you usually get rid of that could end up in Youmbi Sado Rodrigue's shop. Tell Youmbi in a letter about it or any other aspect of his letter that has caught your attention:

ysrodrigue@yahoo.fr

Lent 40 days with the last 40

www.last40.marianistas.org

In collaboration with
www.guiadelmundo.org.uy

Saturday, April 4, 2009

MADAGASCAR

HDI = 0.533



Population: 20,215.200 h.

Area: 587,040 Km²

Capital: Antananarivo

Geography: An extensive central plateau of volcanic origin dominates the coastal plains which are warm and humid, covered in the east by tropical forests, and in the west by a savanna. The eastern part of the island has a lot of rain, but the rest has a dry, tropical climate. The population is concentrated in the high, central lands. Along the coast rice is cultivated and export products: sugar, coffee, bananas, and vanilla. Cattle raising, throughout the island, is another important activity. The principal mineral resources are graphite, chrome, and phosphate.

Among the major environmental problems is deforestation (it is estimated that forest destruction has reached 75% of the land). The scarce sanitation and organic waste have caused the contamination of many of the rivers. Madagascar is considered a great biological reserve, although it is in danger of extinction because of the kinds of cultivation that have been practiced for centuries. Destruction is greater than the capacity of the forest to rejuvenate itself.

People: The Malgaches who constitute 98.9% of the population are composed of different ethnic groups of Malaysian-African-Indonesian origin.

Religion: Traditional African 52%; Christians 41% (21% Catholic, 19% Protestant); Moslems, 7%.

Languages: Malgache and French (official). Hovba and other dialects are also spoken.

Social organizations: There are four central syndicates.



STATISTICS

DEMOGRAPHY

Population: 20,215,200
Annual growth: 3%
Urban population: 28%
Urban growth: 3.7%

HEALTH

Life expectancy: 59 years.
Men: 58 years-Women: 61 years
Children per woman: 4.8
Maternal mortality rate: 550 in 100,000 newborns
Infant mortality: 74 every 1,000
Mortality < 5 years old: 119 every 1,000
Calories a day: 2,040 per capita
29 doctors every 100,000 inhabitants
Access to drinking water: 50%

EDUCATION

Literacy: 71%. Men: 77%-Women: 65%
Primary school: 92%. Men: 93%-Women: 92%
Secondary school: 11%. Men: 11%- Women: 11%
University: 3%
Primary School teachers: 1 teacher every 54 pupils

COMMUNICATIONS

5 newspapers, 131 radio sets, 19.2 TV sets, 3.6 phone lines every 1,000 inhabitants

ECONOMY

GDP per capita: US\$ 923
Annual growth: 4.6%
Annual inflation: 18.5%
External debt: US\$ 186 per capita
Debt Servicing: 60% from exports
Help received: US\$ 68 per capita

LAND

Forests and woodland: 22.1%. Arable land: 5.1%.

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

Health: 1.7% of GDP
Education: 3.3% of GDP
Defence: 1.4% of GDP

LETTER FROM MADAGASCAR

Our dreams also help us to live

Wednesday, 23rd July, 2008.

My name's Myora Andriamahefasolo. I'm 24 years old and the second child of three, all of us single. I live in Antsirabé. I am a child carer for a French gentleman and his Nicaraguan daughter. I also give private tuition in Spanish and French.

I graduated in Spanish two years ago. Now my dream is to visit Spain one day, but of course the ticket is very expensive and with what I earn I'll never be able to afford it. With the work I do now I earn 150,000 ariary (about 60 euros, more or less), just imagine that, but still our dreams help us to survive.

I also help Spanish people who come to our country to visit or to cooperate in education and development programmes. I get to meet lots of Spanish people that way.

When they tell me things about what children and young people do and how they live in Europe it makes me feel angry and impotent because it's not fair that there be such a difference between countries on the same planet; I also get angry because I know that we the people and our leaders, and our very low levels of social compromise and solidarity with the development of our people are partly to blame.

We are a young population. The streets are always full of children, even during school hours, and that's a pity because I've been lucky enough to do a degree and I know the limitations that those who can't read and write are going to find.

Family poverty means that children start working from a very young age and that young girls start getting married and having children at the age of 13. I think that all this holds us back because we're too wrapped up in the here



Antananarivo (Madagascar)



Madagascar



Casa típica (Madagascar)

HISTORY

The island of Madagascar, the fourth largest in the world, is situated in the Indian Ocean, facing the coast of Mozambique. Its inhabitants are called Malgaches.

An indigenous legend says that the first colonizers of the island were white Pygmies who had emigrated in successive waves from Polynesia at the beginning of the first century. These first colonizers had brought with them the cebu, humped-back ox typical of Madagascar and methods of cultivation according to their cultural origins.

Toward the fourteenth century, groups of Comoran merchants established a series of ports in the northern region. These ports were destroyed by the Portuguese between 1506 and 1507.

Not finding gold, or ivory, or spices, the Portuguese lost interest in the land. But the contact with the Europeans brought firearms to the island which were used in barter for slaves.

In the ninth century, Madagascar was an important commercial power in the Indian Ocean, exchanging its products with the coastal peoples and with Arab merchants.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the island was politically united and established a capital in Antananarivo and a government which lasted until 1896 when it was abolished by French troops which converted it and nearby islands into a French colony.

In 1948 in a first attempt to obtain independence, the Malgaches rose in arms against the French occupation but were defeated. Independence did not come until 1960/.

For thirty years there were successive leaders who gave certain stability to the country until 1991 when the people rose against the government which they blamed for the disastrous economic situation by accepting the proposals of the International Monetary Fund and representing the interests of only a few. Although calm returned for some time with another series of presidents in power, again the acceptance of plans imposed by the IMF in the following years were not enough to bring the country out of a generally bad economic situation, nor let the greater part of the population living under the standards of poverty change their situation.

Only 26.5% of the inhabitants of Madagascar live in the cities, and the principal rural activity is agriculture. In recent years, there has been an increased rural emigration to the capital. Unfortunately, many of these people live in the streets and among them more than half are children. These homeless people live in alms and receive no basic sanitary attention or medicine, and live on what they can gather from the trash.

At the present time the life expectancy is only 53.6 years (in Spain the average is 82 years), and in spite of the fact that in recent years there has been a great reduction in the mortality of minors, sicknesses like malaria, diarrhea and strong infections of the respiratory system daily cause the death of 160 children.

LETTER FROM MADAGASCAR

and now (what to eat, what to do, where to go today.....). The future is far away. When we visit schools with European visitors and they ask the children what they want to be when they grow up, they find it hard to reply here. They'll probably reply that they just want to grow up and stay alive; others say they want to be a policeman or an MP because they are the privileged ones: they possess cars, arms, power and money. The young people who have been able to study or who live in the capital want to go to Europe; what we see in them is that they live like kings. When Europeans come here, the young girls, especially, try to get off with a man in order to get away from here, it's the only "means of transport"

All these things are the problems my country suffers, however beautiful it may be. We still need support for education and medicines; many children are dying from diarrhoea and malaria. Because my father is a doctor, we've lived in the countryside for 14 years and I've seen a lot of children die. There are many areas that don't have a dispensary. When you're sick and you need a doctor you have to walk for miles and if you can't walk then the only option is to die.....

I'm proud of my country; it's pretty and cheerful. I feel good although there are lots of things we don't have and other things we need to improve. We love people to visit us and we really enjoy sharing our typical songs and dances with them as well as our local cuisine and typical dishes all based on rice.

You know where to find a friend and Malagasy people that will welcome you like brothers.

Myora Andriamahesfasolo

Excerpt from **Cartas del Sur al Norte** (Letters from the South to the North), PPC, Madrid 2009

GOD ALSO WRITES

The dreams that God put on the heart of the prophets also helped the people to live in hope.

"The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat; The calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf together; and a little child will lead them. The cow and the bear will graze. Their young ones will lie down together. The lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play near a cobra's hole, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea." (Is 11: 6-9)

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO WRITE

Write to Myora in Spanish or French about the dreams that help you to live. myurita@yahoo.es

Lent 40 days with the last 40

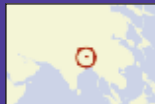
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Sunday, April 5, 2009. Palm Sunday

NEPAL

HDI = 0.534



Population: 28,757.414 h.

Area: 147,180 Km²

Capital: Kathmandu

STATISTICS

DEMOGRAPHY

Population: 28,757,414

Annual growth: 2.4%

Urban population: 17%

Urban growth: 5%

HEALTH

Life expectancy: 64 years.

Men: 63 years-Women: 64 years

Children per woman: 3.3

Maternal mortality rate: 740 in 100,000 newborns

Infant mortality: 56 every 1,000

Mortality < 5 years old: 74 every 1,000

Calories a day: 2,450 per capita

21 doctors every 100,000 inhabitants

Access to drinking water: 90%

EDUCATION

Literacy: 49%. Men: 63%-Women: 35%

Primary school: 78%. Men: 83%-Women: 73%

University: 6%

Primary School teachers: 1 teacher every 40 pupils

COMMUNICATIONS

39 radio sets, 10.5 TV sets, 16.5 phone lines every 1,000 inhabitants

ECONOMY

GDP per capita: US\$ 1,550

Annual growth: 2.7%

Annual inflation: 6.8%

External debt: US\$ 121 per capita

Help received: US\$ 16 per capita

LAND

Forests and woodland: 25.4%. Arable land: 16.5%. Others: 0.9%

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

Health: 1.5% of GDP

Education: 3.4% of GDP

Defence: 2% of GDP



LETTER FROM NEPAL

Thank you for remembering the poor and the needy!

Dear sister in faith

You are fortunate that you were born in a Christian environment and practicing your faith, charity and hope! May Lord Jesus, the Saviour, bless you continually! I am a new Christian and in Nepal we are just a few. I join the prayer community now and then and in the evening my family prays together.

In our village, we have a high school, which is run by the Marianists. A few hundred of students passed out of this school and more than 800 students are studying here, from near and far villages. When the foundation was being laid, the petty-minded and the ignorant people opposed it and spread the rumor that this would spread the Christianity. At one point the entire project was about to be stopped forever due to the life threat for the workers too. In those days, kidnapping and murdering, communal violence and unorganized strikes were frequent.

When we heard that the Christian Missionaries would be building a school in our village, we rejoiced and thanked God for the benefactors. We thought that this was a God sent-blessing to our children to get educated, unlike us! We discussed all the other specialties that would be added up once this school-project got completed, mainly employment for the locals, electricity, transportation, telephone, hospitals and houses for us.

But when we heard that there were obstacles we were frightened! We started fasting and prayed continually, since most of us were new Christians. Some of us started to convince those who were against. Oh, it was very tough! Finally, all agreed.

Geography: Landlocked in the Himalayas, Nepal is made up of three well-defined geographical regions: the Tarai plain, fertile and tropical; the central highlands, covered with pastures and forests and the Himalayas, where one finds the highest altitudes in the world. The different altitudes provide a wide range of climates (from tropical rainforest to cold mountains), which allows for the cultivation of crops such as: rice, sugar cane, tobacco, jute and grains.

The majority of the population depend upon agriculture and animal husbandry. Mineral and hydroelectric resources have yet to be exploited.

People: Nepalese, 53.2%; Biharis (including Maithili's and Bhojpuri's), 18.4%, Tharu 4.8%; Newars 3.4%, Magar 2.2%, Abadhis 1.7% and others 1.6%.

Religion: Hindu (official) 86.2% of the population, Buddhist 7.8%, Muslim 3.8%, Christian 0.2% and others 2%.

Languages: Nepali is the official language (which is spoken by only half of the population). The Tibetan language is the second most widely used.



HISTORY

Nepal's recorded history began with the Kiratis, who arrived in the 7th or 8th century BCE from the east. The Kiratis formed a kingdom and were devoted mainly to grazing. During this period Buddhism made its appearance for the first time in Nepal and was adopted as the religion of the Kiratis.

In 200BCE the Kiratis were overrun by peoples from northern India. The arrival of these groups caused a decline in the practice of Buddhism, a rise in Hinduism and the introduction of the caste system. During this period the first traces of classical Nepalese art and architecture emerged.

In 879 a new dynasty, the Thakuri, arose in a period of instability fraught with foreign invasions. Amidst cultural and political stagnation independence movements began to appear.

Some centuries later, King Arideva founded a new dynasty, the Malla, which initiated a cultural renaissance that eliminated the stagnation that had prevailed during the regime of the Thakuri and resolved political conflicts with the independence movements. This dynasty reached the zenith of its splendor during the fifteenth century under the rule of Yaksha Malla.

In the mid-eighteenth century a new internal conflict arose in Nepal when Prithvi Narayan Shah led his Ghorkha forces in an attack on the Kathmandu valley. In 1768, after 27 years of conflict the Ghorkha forces achieved victory and moved the Nepalese capital to Kathmandu as a base for the Shah dynasty. The regime's army was powerful enough to extend its control throughout the entire Nepalese territory.

In 1814 a new conflict, known as the Anglo-Nepalese War broke out, that pitted Britain against Nepal. Nepal was defeated and forced to sign the treaty of Sugauli (1816), which ceded the territory of Sikkim and most of Terai to the English. This was the beginning of the British presence in Nepalese territory. This treaty established the current political and geographical boundaries of Nepal. In 1857 during the mutiny in India, Nepal sent troops to fight in favor of Great Britain. In a gesture of gratitude, Britain returned the territories of Terai to Nepal .

The Shah dynasty continued in power through the first half of the nineteenth century until The Massacre of Kot in 1846, wherein key leaders who had assembled for a conference, were slaughtered. Jung Bahadur Rana emerged victorious from the strife and arrogated to himself a title to indicate his super-eminence under the name of The Rana. He proclaimed himself Prime Minister for life with the right to designate his successor. Bahadur's reign came to be known as that of the Rana. During the tenure of the Rana, Nepal was organized in a manner similar to the former regime, a factor that provoked successive opposition movements.

After a long period, in 1951, The Rana had to negotiate with advocates of a democratic, multiparty system, an arrangement that was not forged until 1989, when popular outcry resulted in violent clashes, which lasted until King Birenda accepted multiparty democracy.

In 1991 the first democratic elections were held. The new order gave rise to increased political instability, eventually resulting in a civil war in 1996. An armed insurgency of the Communist Party of Nepal, with its Maoist leanings, seized power, which it maintained until April 2006. It was then that King Gyanendra invited seven political parties to participate in an election that would activate the parliamentary system. The Maoist Communist Party of Nepal was victorious in the elections of April 11, 2008. The country was proclaimed a republic by the Constituent Assembly on May 28, 2008.

LETTER FROM NEPAL

Now we have a big school, run by the missionaries who are being supported by the people of the first world brothers and sisters like you. There is a steady progress in everything. Your help brought 45 new houses here, some got jobs, and many are being educated thorough the school. Several people got medical assistance and now a new hospital also being built near the school.

The Missionaries remind us that all the sponsors particularly from the Christian countries assist their needy brothers and sisters throughout the world by making sacrifice regularly, faithfully! Thank you for remembering the poor and the needy! May God bless you!

During my childhood, I had to assist my parents in the farming to survive. At least now my children go to school, through the scholarship provided by the school. When they begin to earn after their education, I believe they will help all those who are in need, lovingly, like you! I long for that day to come.

Anita Khawas

Anita Khawas was born in 1974 in Sunsari, Nepal. She is a mother of four daughters. Anita and her family was converted to Christianity-protestant. She worked as a domestic help in Kuwait for the last two years and returned. Anita is a primary-school dropout and so a volunteer assisted her to write this letter.

Excerpt from **Cartas del Sur al Norte** (Letters from the South to the North), PPC, Madrid 2009

GOD ALSO WRITES

There is always more happiness in giving than in receiving.

"You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us."

(2 Co 9: 11)

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO WRITE

Today, Palm Sunday, spend some time replying to Anita's letter, giving thanks to God, who remembers the poor and needy. You can write in English to Victor Sahayaraj SM, stating in the envelope that the letter if for Anita Khawas, to the following address:

Victor Sahayaraj SM (Anita Khaswas)

Morning Star High School

Bharaul BDC, W.No.3 - District - Sunsari - Nepal

Or to this email address:

svictorsm@yahoo.co.in