

KU JERICO, MOUNDOU, CHAD

To be here and now



A TALE ABOUT A FROG

Once upon a time, there was a frog. It was thrown into a pot of boiling water. And because it was an intelligent frog and the water was too hot, it jumped right out. But one day, someone threw the frog into a pot of warmish water. The frog swam peacefully along, not noticing that the water was heating up, heating up, boiling up. And so did the frog, so she didn't live happily ever after... Let's see if I turn out like the frog in the fable, the weather was nice, tepid here in January. Day by day, the temperature rises. And by the way, there's a real story about a frog. Once, we were dealing with intoxication at the health centre (HC)... A little boy met a frog sitting on a rock and thought of nothing better than to eat it. His only excuse is that he probably couldn't find anything else to eat. And the fact that the locals are used to a slimy meal, as you'll read.

February and March are in the name of **heat, enculturation, discovering Chadian reality and traditions.**

I continue **my missions with patients at the health centre and with the children at school.** I also encounter **limits - my own and cultural.** We discover limits in situations that we are not familiar with. In our country, we are used to freedom, having abilities and what we need and want. Here, there are many things I can't do and many things I don't have. I'm learning to distinguish which limits are there to be pushed, as I like to do, and which need to be accepted. Are you ready to set off for a research expedition with me?

ADVERTISEMENT

IF ANYONE IS LOOKING FOR A LITTLE BLACK BABY, PLEASE CONTACT ME. I GET OFFERS OF AT LEAST TWO EVERY WEEK. LAST TIME IT WAS EVEN THE 5-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER OF AN INTERN!

BY THE WAY, THE PARENTS ARE REALLY SERIOUS. THEY EXPECT ME TO TAKE THE CHILD, THAT THEY WILL HAVE A LIFE IN PARADISE IN EUROPE AND THEN SEND MONEY TO THE WHOLE FAMILY.) ALTHOUGH I HAVE RECEIVED MANY SIMILAR OFFERS, I AM STILL SURPRISED HOW EASILY THEY WOULD GIVE UP THEIR CHILD... AFTER ALL, THERE WOULD BE ANOTHER ONE IN A YEAR. AND THEY BELIEVE I COULD TAKE BETTER CARE OF THE CHILD THAN THEY COULD. ON PRINCIPLE, EVERY WHITE MAN IS RICH.

WILL YOU MARRY ME?

An offer I refused, despite its irresistibility. It first came from an intern Robert. It was more of **an announcement...** After that, the other intern, Clemence, said that no, he already had one wife. Robert insisted: "It doesn't matter. **I have one wife, three children.** And for your sake, I'd let go of the two mistresses, I don't even have children with them yet... **I have three black children. And you'd give me three white ones,** so it's balanced." I don't know why, but I get the feeling that there's not much emphasis on studying genetics here in the medical field :D He's not the first to tell me he'd like to have "white" children with me... Clemence didn't let up easily, "I have a brother, you'll like him. He's 37." "Well, I'm 23, I don't think so..." "Never mind, my younger brother is 20, that's fine, right? And if not, my aunt has a son, he's 27, ideal, decided, you'll marry him. And you'll take my five-year-old daughter with you to Europe, she'll work there then and send money. And when she's rich, she'll come back here." The world according to Clemence is perfectly clear.

PIECES OF CULTURE

The **most bizarre offer** came a day later. I was walking home from the HC when a motorbike pulled up in the dirt road next to me, with two Chadians on it. The first one was kind of overweight, you rarely see that here, a man in his late forties. "Bonjour ma soeur, good day, my sister. Mademoiselle or madame?" I don't want to lie. "Hello, miss." "**Will you marry me?**" and he's already making room for me on his motorbike, so **I can go straight away with him.** I think the same offer would have come even if I had answered madame... When I told the story to a paramedic, he wondered why I hadn't said yes. "Why should I?" "To see how the story goes!" Well, sometimes I prefer to remain blissfully ignorant.

Life is different in the capital, first, they ask for a phone number, the marriage proposal comes second.



ONE CAN TRANSPORT ALL ON MOTO - CHAIR FOR THE BISHOP



EXIT FROM THE MARKETPLACE



AT THE TABLE FOR NUNS



OFFERTORY OF THE GIFTS - BANANS!

SPORT

Unfortunately, **I missed the Olympics** because of bad wifi. On local TV channels, it seems like it doesn't exist... Maybe because most of the nation doesn't understand the word winter and the sports are on a strange white substance that resembles sand, but the locals have never seen it? Probably. So if you have any interesting tidbits, be sure to email them to me or send me short footage.

On the other hand, **football** means all here. There's a **team in every village**, no goal nets, no jerseys, half-blown ball, but they play with joy and passion. And the big event was the **African Cup of Nations**, which Senegal won. Since they don't have TVs in the huts, the locals gather around one radio and experience the match in all its glory, as if they were in a stadium!



SALE OF PAGNE AT THE MARKET

MARKETPLACE

You can find just about anything here, from **vegetables, meat, fish, mesh for braids, clothes, African fabrics, medications and their counterfeits** (lottery which version you get) to **notebooks, pens, cables and solar batteries.** Muslims lounge peacefully on their wares displayed on the counter. And the **prices are not fixed, you have to haggle!** If only Clotilde and I went there, we wouldn't have enough to pay, firstly because we don't know how to haggle and secondly because as soon as someone sees a white skin, the price is twice as high.

You have to watch your backpack, one guy with a chopped wound on his head tried to steal our phone... He looked malnourished and miserable. Desperate times call for desperate measures.



ROBERT, LEON AND CLEMENCE RIGHT AFTER THE PROPOSAL



HOLY MASS OUTDOORS

HOLY MASS

Mass, **the big event every Sunday.** It lasts **at least two hours.** Everyone has washed themselves and their clothes, it's a mystery to me how the women can find such clean and unwrinkled clothes in the dusty huts! However, the great experience was the mass in the village of Lolo, where the bishop created a new parish and appointed a new parish priest during the mass. And guess how long it was? It started **an hour and a half late.** And then it **lasted five hours!!!!** All this in **Ngambay.** Believe me, it was quite an experience. But you could see the joy of the people, there must have been **several thousand** of them gathered, singing, dancing. And the best part came at the end, the waiting was worth it. The villagers started **bringing donations** for their new priest! It's amazing how everyone gives what they can, even with the little they have. And so Clotilde and I had a great time as they started bringing **soap, pasta, live chickens, whole bunches of bananas on their heads, brooms or even live goats!**

BECOMING AFRICAN

How so? Like **feet**, for example. There's a lot of dust. And when we wear open shoes, our feet **gradually turn black**. And some places just can't be scrubbed, especially for Clotilde! Probably because she's been here three weeks longer. Do you think we'll turn all black in a few months?



SCARF-TYING LESSON

Scarves. Tying a headscarf on your head is not as easy as it looks. Muslim women go veiled, Ngambay women with a neatly tied scarf. But we're learning!



IT'S NOT EASY



MARIE (BEHIND) TAUGHT ME

Carrying things on your head. When we return from school tutoring, I wear a bucket with dishes on my head three times a week. Marie from last JET News taught me how to do it. I couldn't carry it at first. Now I can walk **all the way without holding it**, Marie is a good teacher!



ALMOST LIKE IN THE MIRROR, ISN'T IT?

Baby on my back. African women don't cuddle babies in their arms, there are **no strollers or cribs**. Babies live either on the ground or strapped to their mother's back. During the week of Cana (a community mission for married couples, it is also in other countries, check it out ☺), Clotilde and I were **babysitting** several times. One little girl kept crying, nothing helped... So I had the idea to put her on my back as she is used to. That's when she stopped crying! But let me tell you, it's not easy, a baby like that on your back! Le pagne, with which I strapped her, kept slipping down. But babies are incredibly used to it, at the age of a few months, they can hold themselves on mommy's backs before she ties them up!



ORTENCE IS BRAIDING



CHOPPING OF CAPTAIN

Braids. Yes, I've had them twice in Europe already. But now it's the real ones, African, black! First, I had to **buy the mesh at the market**. And then the lady from the village comes (3,5 hours late but as if it hadn't happened according to her expression), we sit outside on the mat, and **she creates the braids on my head in 4 hours**, with the occasional pinch of mut-mut flies. It's practical, children at school love to touch my hair, when braided, it entices them a bit less.



CHILDREN LOVE TO TAKE PHOTOS



NOT ONLY CHILDREN

Dress. Our first African! We each picked out a pagne we liked at the market. Aissatou, the midwife, sews as a side job. So we ordered the dresses we wanted from her, I borrowed a model from a teacher at school. And we're ready for the wedding!



BRAIDED!



WITH CLOTILDE



TAILOR-MADE DRESS

ENCOUNTER WITH SOLDIERS

On my arrival, I met **Richard** at N'Dj, who invited me to his **wedding with Gloria** on the 26th of February. On the one hand, it's a great cultural experience, on the other hand, to go is also a risk at the moment. A few weeks ago, there were incidents in one city, and since then, there have been **protests and demonstrations in N'Dj**. And it has to be said that they are less peaceful here in terms of loss of lives than our Czech Velvet Revolution... In short, this was the first time in my life I possibly couldn't go somewhere because it was not safe. We don't get that feeling in the Czech republic. And I really hope it stays that way.

Chad is one of the countries our Ministry of foreign affairs strongly discourages to travel to for many reasons. On the other hand, who has actually been here in person to assess the situation? Yes, there are **dangerous regions, places**. But there are also **millions of people who live peacefully in their villages**. You don't hear much about the unrest here in the Czech media. Fortunately or unfortunately? Unfortunately, because we can continue to pretend that many countries in Africa exist only on the map and that their (non-)existence is of no concern to us. And fortunately, because at least you don't worry about me. But as we probably all know, there are unfortunately more dangerous places right now.

DO WE KNOW IN CHAD WHAT'S GOING ON IN EUROPE?

LOCALS NOT A LOT, THEY HAVE ENOUGH TO WORRY. BUT IN THE COMMUNITY WE DO. BROTHERS AND SISTERS GAVE THEIR LIVES TO SERVE GOD, THEY WORK ON MISSIONS WHERE THEY ARE. AND AT THE SAME TIME THEY ARE INTERESTED IN THE WORLD AND PRAY FOR IT. WE DON'T HAVE UKRAINIAN REFUGEES HERE, IN MANY COMMUNITY HOUSES IN EUROPE THEY OPENED THE GATES AND WELCOMED THEM.

In the end, we decided to go to the wedding. Yes, it's a **small risk**, but it's not too dangerous, the community wouldn't let us go otherwise. And if you know me, you know that I have an adventurous nature 😊



BUS IN UNUSUALLY WELL-PRESERVED STATE



AND TWO PASSENGERS



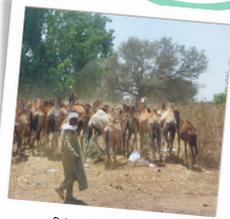
INTERIOR

We're going to have a ten-hour journey, which I told you a lot about in the first JET news, but this time by bus. The ticket price is 11000F, that's 17EUR. Nothing cheap, if you're a local, you've probably never been to the capital. But the bus was full anyway, mostly Muslims. I'll share with you two experiences from the trip.

Snack. Just when we got hungry, the most broken section of the journey began, when it's almost **impossible to hit your mouth with food**. But we made it. And if you can eat on the bus? Almost everything is allowed here. You can just spill water on your hands, like our neighbour lady. And nobody cares that it runs down the aisle.

A **toilet break** along the way. Everyone gets off the bus, and as the toilets don't exist, stands or squats alongside the bus while everyone else sees them. Since everyone present would indeed have a too memorable experience from the two white butts, which after all shine more than the black ones, Clotilde and I preferred to survive the whole trip almost without water.

Interesting experience. I've never been this close to armed soldiers making dramatic faces and shouting orders in Arabic. Just the sight of their armed car gives me the chills. However, the local people are quite used to it, the situation is a bit tense from time to time, and checks are on a daily basis. But the idea that you live in a quiet town in Ukraine and suddenly this becomes your everyday reality hand in hand with bombs, is terrifying. And perhaps thanks to experiences like these, I can imagine it at least a tiny little bit, our generation has thankfully been spared...



ON THE WAY



AFRICAN BEAUTY

We're just snacking a **delicious banana from Cameroon** when the bus comes to a screeching halt. A **soldier with a machine gun appears** next to the driver, **shouting something in Arabic**. People start getting off in a hurry. We have no idea what's going on... But the neighbour across the aisle remains seated. And so do we, after all, we're not going to get disturbed halfway through a banana (it's a dilemma though, continuing to eat seems silly, but putting down a banana half-eaten seems even more ridiculous...) I try to figure out what's going on. We don't dare to talk. We observe, like in the cinema, the banana instead of the popcorn. With the heat outside, it's better than a 5D cinema! A **soldier with a machine gun stops in the aisle right next to us**. But he won't even look at us... And I finally understand that only men are getting out. They're standing outside the bus, and the other armed soldier checks them out. ID card, backpack. It's a check for terrorists, to see if they're carrying a bomb. However, as you can see, a **woman doesn't mean much in the local culture...** That's why the soldiers don't care. **So if a woman carries a bomb in her backpack, it doesn't matter, it doesn't count.**

THE MOST INTERESTING MOMENTS CAN'T BE CAPTURED IN THE PHOTOS. EITHER THEY HAPPEN TOO QUICKLY OR SNAPPING THE SITUATION COULD HAVE UNPLEASANT CONSEQUENCES. CHILDREN AND PEOPLE WE KNOW LOVE TO TAKE PICTURES AND EVEN MORE TO WATCH THEM AFTERWARDS. PEOPLE IN THE STREETS ARE THE CONTRARY.

We made it safely to N'Djamena (another adventure, I still didn't have a Chadian SIM and Clotilde's didn't work, luckily her French one still did, better not ask about the cost of the call :D), we were picked up by the priest Elysée.

I like the capital. Lifestyle is kind of... urban. People here are on the one hand richer, on the other hand poorer, some have really nothing... But it feels like people live life a bit more here, not just survive.

WEDDING IN A CHADIAN STYLE

We had a **wedding on Saturday**. From the beginning to the end! That means with the **dowry** and the **traditional ceremony**. But watch out, TIA, things are different here! The dowry is not the bride's fortune that she carries into marriage, but the **price the groom must pay** the bride's family to give her to him! Not nicely said, the wife is bought from the family... This belongs to the local traditions. In the bride's courtyard, the whole family is gathered except the groom, the bride is hidden in a room. Friends and acquaintances (at least 100) sit around. The family is on a mat on the ground, haggling over the price. In addition to the money, the groom has also brought lots of drinks, fabrics, scarves early in the morning... The ritual is complicated. In short, the families finally agree, **the bride price - 350 000F, that's 540EUR**.



DOWRY DISCUSSION



WOMEN ON THE GROUND SHARE THE MEAL



WITH THE BRIDE

Do you know the feeling when you come out of church after a wedding mass and someone starts walking around with shots? Well, why wait until the end of the mass when you can **start drinking** before it? Anyway, hard alcohol is very expensive here, the locals drink **bili-bili**, which is prepared by women for their husbands at home. Bili-Bili is poured into a **bucket that circulates among the people, there is one shared cup in it from which everyone drinks**. How fortunate that malaria is not transmitted by alimentary transmission... With the number of cases already here, it wouldn't do the local population any good :D Thanks to my vaccination marathon against everything possible, I'm pretty much calm. However, I still hope I won't carry Shigellosis or any similar gift from this feast, besides a profound experience.



TABLE FOR NOWLYWEDS



CHURCH DECORATION



I, RICHARD, TAKE YOU, GLORIA, TO BE MY WIFE...

Then we could enter the room and greet **the bride**. Her name is **Gloria**, she's 19. Afterwards, we moved by car to the groom's yard (there were 10 of us in the car, two babies but not their mothers, here biologic parents don't necessarily take care of children, for example, the groom Richard grew up with his aunt). Everyone was dancing. Well, only the women. It's a **traditional dance where they walk in a circle and shake their shoulders** in a way that is incomprehensible to us. They insisted that we must dance with them. I think all 200 people enjoyed the sight of two white women trying to imitate the others without a big success. Then it was time to eat. On one **side**, the men sit at tables, eating first. On the other side, we women, on a mat on the ground. And **last to eat are the children**, who are at the side. There's a first time for everything. **We eat all together from one big plate, with our hands**. Hands are washed only with water, in a basin where 50 people have washed their hands before you. I was grateful again for the little hand sanitiser in my bag. But when 8 of you eat from one plate and the sanitiser was used by me, Clotilde and Sister Jacqueline, it probably doesn't have much effect anyway. And what's on the menu? **La boule with gombo sauce, the traditional dish of Chad**. It's flour (often rice or corn flour) mixed with water, the porridge is cooked, filled into a hemisphere, which is then flipped over like a sand mold for children at the beach. The pieces are taken by hand, dipped in gombo sauce. It's not as easy as it looks! In fact, it's almost impossible for us to eat without staining our clothes. How so? The fruits of the gombo, from which the sauce is cooked, give it a **slimy and elastic texture...** A piece of the sauce is dragging behind your hand, a bit is dripping... But unfortunately, I can't blame the sauce, apart from Clotilde and me, **none of the locals got a stain on their clothes...** Well, when you eat this every day (mostly as the only meal), you probably get trained.



OUR LUNCH COMPANY



LA BOULE + SLIMY GOMBO



BILI-BILI AND SHARED CUP



SHOULDER DANCE

After lunch (which was prepared by the groom's family, the bride's family brought the after-mass food, la boule and two whole cows), we moved on to the **holy mass**. A large modern church. The mass was pretty similar to ours, except that the **little girls who did their shoulder dance** would probably have been pretty shocking in our church. After mass, someone from the bride's family was supposed to come to **clean the church**. They didn't. And since the community helped a lot with the wedding organisation, we were left to do it. And so while everyone is standing outside, Clotilde and I, the only two white, are sweeping the church, with Sister Rose and Jacqueline and the priest Elysée. A situation like in the textbooks of 19th century America, only in reverse! :D Anyway, there's garbage everywhere, so I understand that the locals don't mind throwing trash on the ground in the church, or don't think about picking it up.

And after an afternoon's rest, there's a celebration to come! However, it is African time, the newlyweds arrived two hours late. And without them, the party can't begin. While we were waiting, we suddenly heard **shooting somewhere in the distance...** There are **districts of the city where there are demonstrations right now. And in other district, they're celebrating marriage. That's life here, and we have to adapt to it!** The evening passed quickly, food, a few African dances. We finished at 9pm, the night streets belong only to the braver ones. It was a full and amazing day that made me **understand the local culture a little bit more again!**

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



It's celebrated in a big way here on the 8th of March. Women appreciate this day. They buy pagnes with giant prints of 8.3.2022 and big heads of women. Personally, I wouldn't want to wear this year's model, the woman has red eyes, it looks a bit scary... We celebrated the day with sister Sylvie and all the teachers from the school at the house of one of them. The men cook for their wives at home (the only day of the year when this is the case), they can give them a small gift. At our school gathering, although the women cooked, **the dishes were washed by the men after the meal**, together with Clotilde, who insisted on helping :D Then we went in a bar for a beer for the first time since here in Chad (not so easy here, Clotilde and I can't go out alone, they say it's not safe, but this way in a group we could). While we were sitting in the inner garden, someone came to offer us to buy shoes, then dried fish, live chickens, a watch, a dress, a deaf and dumb boy poster on the wall that said For God all things are possible.

If you go for a beer in the Czech Republic, as soon as you finish it, there's another one.. Here we go on another level, just after you open a bottle and take a few sips, there's already another bottle in front of you! So excited the staff is that they can sell something. And it's hard to convince them that you're not taking a third beer when it's only 4pm, it's at least 40 outside, feels like 50 and the sun is beating down... Back home we took the **"clando" driven by clandoman Christian**. He drank one beer with us before we left, which is well below the average here in terms of blood alcohol content while driving. Of course, everyone rides without a helmet, I've seen two helmets in the whole town so far.

But I have to say that even on the sandy roads Christian drove really well, he is in reason favourite clandoman of the community, we didn't even have time to worry.



At the end of February, the priest Francois Michon, who is in charge of the whole international community, came to stay with us for a few days. A great event for the brothers and sisters here in the house and from all over Chad (in N'Dj or married couples in different cities). But don't think of it as an obligatory political meeting, more like a family gathering full of joy, looking back at the missions and looking forward to what's next for the community. I can share with you a few thoughts that struck me in his sermon.

EVERY PERSON DEDICATES THEIR LIFE TO SOMETHING, CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY. WE HAVE CHOSEN TO SERVE JESUS. OUR STRENGTH, AS A COMMUNITY HERE AND OVERALL, IS THAT WE HAVE GIVEN JESUS AUTHORITY OVER OUR LIVES. WE ARE NOT A COMMUNITY OF DOCTORS OR TEACHERS, YET THROUGH THE SCHOOL AND HEALTH CENTRE WE CAN SERVE AND SPREAD GOD'S LOVE.

Also, the **season of Lent** has begun. Fasting from meat makes no sense in my case, neither does fasting from chocolate, I have that all year, it's almost not here. I chose to fast from complaining. There are things I miss here. Cheese, yoghurt, skirts shorter than ankle-length, the ability to just go out, alone, for coffee, cake or beer. Not that I do that every day at home, but just having that option... And so, during Lent, I want to learn to accept these limits, which are also part of my volunteer year.

I'm also **thinking in prayer of each of you** to whom I send my JET news, if you have specific intentions, be sure to email me!

COMMUNITY LIFE



IN THE COMMUNITY OF KU JERICHO WE FORM

- **THE BODY** - WE HEAL IN THE HEALTH CENTER
- **THE SPIRIT** - WE PROVIDE EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL
- **THE SOUL** - AT THE GABRIEL BALET CENTER, WE ORGANISE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, SPIRITUAL FORMATIONS, MARRIAGE PROGRAMS, SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION.

WE ARE SUPPOSED TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. BUT HOW? HOW MUCH? FOR THE ANSWER WE NEED PRAYER, SPENDING TIME WITH JESUS, LEARNING FROM HIM, WATCHING AS HE ACTS IN THE GOSPELS.

Health in Chad

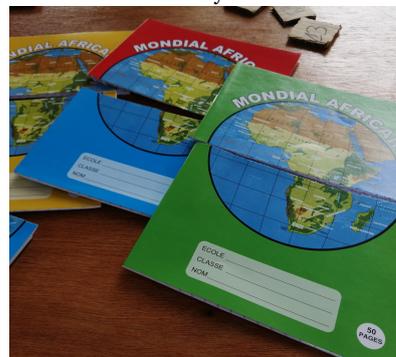
My **main mission** here is at the **health centre**. It was founded by the community, originally as a nursing clinic for school children, and has grown and grown over time. Every health centre, even private ones, is assigned a **health zone** by the Chadian government. People from the surrounding villages either walk or pay for mototaxis, which are called "clando" here. The farthest village in our zone is **10 km away**, but many people from outside the zone also come to us. There is no doctor present, the Chadian nurse is legally responsible. For this reason, one does **not go to the doctor, but for consultation**. For residents of our zone it costs 200 F, outside the zone twice as much. When the ophthalmologist and dentist were here, a visit cost 2000 and 3000 F (For EUR divide by 655).



When you arrive, you go to the reception. Our **receptionist Eliane (she is the youngest grandmother I know, she is 34)** fills out a **notebook** (name, age and village - especially age is useless information, they kind of miss the fact that it is a time-dependent variable) for 100F, you pay 400F for a consultation. And then **you wait. And you wait.** On a bench outside before the consultation, but we have benches under a shelter so at least there's shade. Anyway, nobody minds waiting. It's a natural part of life here. In the Czech Republic, we are already nervous in the waiting room after 15 min! Here you come at 8am and leave at 2pm. When it's your turn, a nurse will see you for a consultation. She will do a basic examination and send you to the **lab** (assuming you have money for the tests), I'll tell you about that next time. And then you wait for the results again. You then go to the consultation, where you are given a diagnosis (most often malaria) and **prescribed medication** in a notebook. You then go back to Eliane to pick them up. Again, **provided you have the money for them.** With the medicaments you go to the **infirmary** where dressings, i.v. and i.m. injections are administered. And that completes the circle, you can go home. And in case of malaria, come back tomorrow and the day after for other Artemether injections.



And how does it all work? Let's go through the whole circle from the beginning. Close your eyes, **let your imagination run.** You're a Muslim woman, second wife of your Muslim husband. You live a **nomadic life**, when the water runs out for the donkeys or camels, you pack up your tents, load everything onto a cart and move on twenty kilometres away. One day you notice that one of your 7 children (3 died after birth and the first wife has another 6) is limping. The girl is 10 years old or so, no one knows her birth date. Her name is Adama. But there's no time to waste, we're migrating right now. Hygiene is not much of a concern, water is precious and soap expensive. Adama is lagging behind the others. One day you decide to look what's going on. There's an **open wound on her shin** under her long skirt. As the days go by, it festers more and more. Adama's condition begins to worry you, also because she can't work as much as the other children, and your husband doesn't like it. But you don't dare to tell him about the wound. You're just a woman... After six months, you know it can't go on like this. With all your courage you show your husband Adama's wound. He's not happy, after all, she's his daughter. And the daughter will get married one day and the family will get a dowry for her. But life goes on for another six months. **After a year of the wound festering**, you get near a health centre and the husband hears from other Muslims that there are some white doctors there... So he brings Adama to us. I don't know if the story's beginning was exactly like that, I'm just guessing based on pieces. But the rest of it is true. And also that they came after one year.



Where do the **drugs come from**? Once every three months a group order is made for all the diocesan HC, it comes from the Netherlands to the central pharmacy in Moundou, from where they are distributed. What surprised me is the way the medicaments are sold to patients, you get **cut off exactly the number of tablets you need. After all, why pay for the whole box?** There's something to it. On the other hand, you don't think at all about what you're taking, if you've been given 15 paracetamols, you'll eat 15 of them, even if you don't have a temperature or pain anymore. And by the way, most often you leave here with prescribed Artemether injections for malaria, also erythro or amoxi for almost anything. And on top of that, lots of the paracetamol or ibuprofen.

But back to our Adama.

ADAMA'S STORY

I was just passing by the infirmary, and the nurse called me in to check it out. A **Muslim girl** in a soccer jersey is sitting on a bench, braids along her head, poker face, doesn't speak. Daddy, on the other hand, speaks a lot, he doesn't mind that I can't understand a word of his Arabic. He's all happy to see someone with white skin, after all, that's the only reason he brought Adama. She has **two open, festering wounds on her right shin. Part of the bone is sticking out** of the bottom wound. **Diagnosis: osteomyelitis.** We don't have a microbiology lab here, so antibiotics are just randomly applied. And often. But rarely for long enough. Yes, and the fact that you can buy the antibiotics at the market contributes to resistance. On the other hand, most of them are fakes anyway, grated and compressed chalk, so the bigger reason for resistance remains prescription atb for everything for too short time. In the case of osteomyelitis, they prescribed atb for a week. The treatment lasts at least 6 weeks in this condition... The other thing is that few people can afford to buy an atb for such a long time. I'm sure you're thinking, okay, but that won't get the bone back in. You're right. However, we don't have surgery or X-ray. They wouldn't have done much for Adama at Central hospital. The other option is a hospital run by nuns 80 km away. But money... Adama's daddy couldn't even afford a bandage. We got a good hydrocellular dressings from France to facilitate moist healing. Of course, if you put just a piece of plaster over it, it's going to fall off soon... **Many things are hard for me to accept here. No money for a bandage, no bandage. No money for medicaments, you leave without.** No money for surgery? You'll go without, and you'll probably need an amputation, but you won't have money for that either... Sepsis, and then Daddy's sad because he's lost a daughter to marry and it means one dowry less.

However, our health centre has a **solidarity fund** thanks to donors (which is also you when you donated to my mission here!), if someone can't afford treatment and it is important to them, Sister Typhaine, who runs the health centre, and Eliane can decide to provide the medicaments as a donation from the community. And because of that, I was able to do some good dressings for Adama, find bandage. For the antibiotics, Daddy contributed what he could, the rest they got from the fund. They came to us for a week for basic i.v. atb treatment and dressings, now they have migrated again. She also got from us flour enriched with minerals and vitamins for malnourished children, her body has signs of malnutrition and in this condition any treatment has less chance of success. They should come back in a month, we'll see if she comes back and what else we can do for Adama. I gave her a simple bracelet to say goodbye. It was the first time she smiled at me.



And back to the health system here. There is **no health insurance system in Chad.** You may have looked at your paycheck and wondered what the amount would be without the mandatory health and social security contributions... After what I see here, I don't even want to imagine that scenario anymore! Let's be glad for our system where everyone has access to basic health care, which is on a good level. If you are sick, you start with traditional treatment. That means shaman, herbs. If you survive this, you try to buy medicine in the market. Most of them are counterfeit, so no effect. Or they're real, but for a



different disease or you don't know how to use them. And the last solution is to go to the health centre. Sometimes you wait till you get your paycheck. One teacher at my school waited till the end of the month... Two days before the paycheck, they brought him already **unconscious with malaria.** **And what do we treat here? Almost everything!** Apart from the usual consultations, there are also consultations for **children, pregnancy and maternity care** (although most women give birth at home), **vaccinations** for babies, care for **malnourished children.** If the situation is beyond us, we refer patients to one of the two hospitals in Moundou. They have an x-ray machine there, though this month theirs broke down, leaving the whole wide area without an x-ray machine and waiting in vain for the results.

We have a prehistoric ECG, but no one can read it well, so it's not used. We have portable ultrasound machines for pregnant women, one modern as a gift from France that can be used on all types of tissue. Still, no one is an ultrasound specialist... The **infirmary is equipped only in the most basic way.** Gauze pads, betadine, ethanol, band-aids. **Everything else people have to buy.** Changing the dressing also costs money. The prices aren't high. Not for us. But for the locals...

I am witness of stories that have a happy or sad end, both, that's the reality of life. Next time I will tell you more about the children whose health and nutrition I follow up.

CLOTILDE AND I SHARE QUITE A LOT, THERE WAS ONLY ONE MOSQUITO NET IN THE NDJ, WE MANAGED TO WORK OUT A WAY OF FIXING IT TO BOTH BEDS, WE AGREED THAT WE PREFERRED EACH OTHER'S COMPANY TO LOTS OF MOSQUITOES.



WHEN THE KIDS SHAKE OUR HANDS OR JUST TOUCH US, THEY OFTEN CHECK THEIR OWN PALMS AFTERWARDS, PROBABLY HOPING TO GET A BIT OF OUR WHITE COLOUR ON THEM.

My little joys

I've written quite a lot still it's not all that I would like to share with you. As a reward for those of you who have read this far, a few more funny observations.

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED HOW HARD IT IS TO TAKE A SELFIE IN THE DARK WHEN YOU'RE BLACK? THE DARK SPOT NEXT TO US IS PRIEST ELYSÉE, IN CASE YOU DIDN'T RECOGNISE HIM.



BY THE WAY, HE'S REALLY FUN TO BE WITH, THE SUN WAS BEATING DOWN SO MUCH ON THE WAY BACK FROM NDJ THAT HE COMPLAINED HIS HANDS WERE BURNING. SO WE PUT SUNSCREEN ON THEM, HIS SKIN TURNED WHITE. AND HE SAID IT BURNED LESS! IT WAS THE SECOND TIME IN HIS LIFE THAT HE HAS WORN SUNSCREEN, THE FIRST TIME HAD BEEN IN FRANCE WHEN HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS, BUT EVERYONE WAS PUTTING IT AND HE WAS SURPRISED THAT NO ONE OFFERED IT TO HIM, BUT HE ENDED UP WEARING IT TOO AND IT AMUSED EVERYONE, AFTER ALL, THE INTENSITY OF THE SUN IN FRANCE IS FAR FROM WHAT HIS SKIN IS USED TO.



DURING OUR SPARE MOMENTS WE PLAY THE FLUTE, WE'RE CURRENTLY PRACTICING A HAYDN CONCERTO FOR TWO FLUTES. THE LOCALS HAVE NEVER SEEN SUCH AN INSTRUMENT IN THEIR LIVES. WHEN IT WAS AISSATOU'S BIRTHDAY, WE PLAYED FOR HER. THE EXPRESSIONS OF NOT ONLY THE CHILDREN BUT ALSO THE TEACHERS WHO GATHERED AROUND US IN FRONT OF THE SCHOOL WERE PRICELESS!



THIS MINIBUS IS A TYPICAL PROTOTYPE. IT'S MISSING PARTS, IT'S DRIVING WITH THE DOORS OPEN AND THE ROOF INCREDIBLY LOADED, THERE ARE 18 PASSENGERS INSIDE AND LOOK OUT, TWO GOATS IN THE BACK!

IN ADDITION, WE OCCASIONALLY GO FOR A WALK IN THE VILLAGE, TWO CHILDREN JOINED US, THEY DIDN'T SPEAK FRENCH AND OUR NGAMBAY CONVERSATIONS ENDED WITH "WHAT'S YOUR NAME" AND "HOW ARE YOU", BUT THEY WALKED THE WHOLE VILLAGE WITH US! ONE MOM WHO COMES TO ME TO WEIGH THE TWINS INVITED US TO HER YARD.



You already know little Kadidja very well. She's now 4.5 months old and when they last arrived she already weighed over 7kg and has become a beautiful, perhaps a tiny little bit chubby baby! And she's still not very dark, she's the daughter of Muslims, they tend to be lighter, but not that much. And it's true that **black babies are born lighter!** But I can't tell when they darken to a definite colour (it's very dark in Chad). **Kadidja's daddy tells me every time that she looks like me!** :D And that I'm going to take her with me to Europe.

I'm already looking forward to writing you another letter, there are so many experiences here that they won't fit on a few pages! Thank you so much to those of you who have donated to my mission in the community here, I hope you can better imagine thanks to this JET news that we can buy **milk for Kadidja, the twins Marlin and Marina or Tripos and Dieu Beni and many other children. Bandages for those who can't pay for it themselves. Packages of pasta and sardines for Christelle, who is 14 and lives at home only with two sisters and finds food as she can. Pens for kids at school. I really appreciate that I have the chance to see the happy endings of stories in which you also play a part!**

Your Terez

