

# **Written Statement from Fraternite Notre Dame**

## **52nd Session of the Commission for Social Development**

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Fraternite Notre Dame, founded by Most Rev. Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik, works to relieve poverty around the world. In this pessimistic world, so enslaved to selfishness and money, we wish to testify that uniting goodwills among Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) can tackle the misery inherent with poverty conditions. Selfless charity still exists! And can be set as an ideal for an entire lifetime. -Thank God!

For 19 years, Fraternite Notre Dame has been actively working in Haiti, serving the most destitute, in a mountainous area cut off from the rest of the country and quite less provided for in various fields, including children's education, health and development.

In 2011 in Haiti, the World Food Programme (WFP) financed one of our large projects in infrastructure, building a segment of road to open up sections of the local population. The project provided jobs for 800 people for months, each receiving wages and food support. In addition to this, UNICEF allowed us to build a school for over 500 pupils right after the 2012 earthquake, that rocked the island.

Collaboration between various NGOs also enabled us to providing shelter to hundreds of poor families, through wood-and-block structures. Other benefactors are bringing in potable water and medicine. Hairdressers, medical doctors or dentists are offering their services to benefit the children; army mechanics are fixing the vehicles needed to transport the sick and injured through the mountains free of charge and physicians and nurses provide free care at Fraternite Notre Dame's dispensary.

In another part of our world, in Niger, Africa, we are working within the framework of supporting childhood. Fraternite Notre Dame welcomes orphans or children in precarious family situations, minors or children from single mothers or those with mental deficiencies. The literacy rate in Niger is only 28.7 %.

His Excellency, Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik, has always insisted on the importance of educating little girls. Since 2002, Fraternite Notre Dame has been managing a kindergarten, along with a primary and secondary school, which welcome over 700 children, among whom many are orphaned and come from needy families.

Most of these children in need have obtained excellent results at their school exams towards graduation. Thanks to a positive pooling of generous donors, we are in a position to assist 135 families with food. Located in a popular area of Niamey, our clinic offers care for all: consultations in general medicine, gynecology, pediatrics, as well as immunization programs and minor surgery. Such infrastructures have created some jobs for the locals. Not long ago, a facility dedicated to maternity had been developed, which allows for follow up visits and advocacy for household mothers who experience precarious family situations. There is also an opening to sensitize them to the necessity of emphasizing schooling for girls in particular, as they are more neglected than boys. Without instruction, there is no hope for social integration: Fraternite Notre Dame is committed in the field, to promote that cause.

Upon request from judicial authorities in Niger, Fraternite Notre Dame also offers temporary assistance to children in social difficulty, such as those who have escaped from domestic violence, or been victimized by human trafficking or ill-treatment. The groups being part of the Coalition of Nigerien NGOs for the Rights of Children (CONIDE), of which Fraternite Notre Dame is a founding member, work together in a common aim to make the rights and duties of children known, towards improving their condition by opposing trafficking and forced labor. Lobbying with national or international entities, along with regional and local communities and religious leaders, we cooperate and work for a better implementation of the rights of children.

In Europe, volunteering and goodwill initiatives are not encouraged. As a tragic result, the following fact was observed in France: poverty among those aged 18-24 has increased by 4 % in urban areas. Volunteering to help others is indispensable in any society, and should be acknowledged by all. Fueling hatred between minorities, imposing a sectarian model, under the pretext of supreme secularism, has never contributed any good to the social and economical welfare of civilization in general, nor society in particular.

*More than ever, we need respect for all and tolerance for all, with no distinction of race, class, gender or creed.*

*[ End of Fraternite Notre Dame's Written Statement ]*