

- 2014 Annual Report -

Charitable et Humanitarian Activites of Fraternite Notre Dame in Niamey, Niger, West Africa

A founding member and part of the National Executive Board of the Nigerien Coalition for Children's Rights (CONIDE), which it serves as General Secretary for Communication, **Fraternite Notre Dame** has engaged in numerous activities throughout 2014, within the framework of defending the human rights, and in particular, in favor of respecting and implementing children's rights, in keeping with the Convention dealing with Children's Rights and the African Charter for Children's Rights and Wellbeing, two international documents ratified by the State of Niger.

In 2013, Fraternite Notre Dame was appointed by a Ministry of Justice Resolution, a member of the Drafting Committee for a project of juvenile judicial protection, and early 2014, it participated in the many meetings that paved the way for a responsible judicial policy for vulnerable children. This innovative document will fill a judicial void when it comes to dealing with children in a difficult social and family situation, and will strive to offer answers other than coercive, for an improved support of children in need of special judiciary juvenile aid, knowing that judiciary juvenile protection does not apply only to children who are delinquent but applies to any child in need of protection.

1. A Few Highlights for 2014:

April 22nd to 25th, 2014: Fraternite Notre Dame participated in a validation workshop on this judiciary juvenile policy project. The workshop brought together many jurists, including lawyers, magistrates, NGO representatives in charge of children's rights; the project

was laid out and adopted, while a plan of action was decided towards implementing the judiciary juvenile policy.

April 5th to June 9th, 2014: Fraternite Notre Dame participated in the meetings of the Preparation Committee for the African Child Day, and the Topic chosen by the committee of Experts on Children's Rights and Wellbeing of the African Union was: "A Free, Adequate, Compulsory, and Quality Education for All African Children".

June 16th, 2014: Fraternite Notre Dame participated in the celebration of World Day of the African Child, and as a reminder, the event was willed by the Assembly of the African Union, in memory

of hundreds of children in Soweto, South Africa, who were massacred by the Apartheid, for having marched



to claim their rights. Each year, a new topic is selected, and the purpose of this Day is to trigger collective awareness on the promotion of children's rights and wellbeing in Africa.

The children of Fraternite Notre Dame's orphanage presented a sketch on the importance of education, towards a better development of society.

During the ceremony, the Minister in charge of Population, the Promotion of Women and Protection of Children expressed his satisfaction to Fraternite Notre Dame, for the work realized by His Excellency, Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik, Founder of Fraternite Notre Dame, and his religious people: ardent defenders of human rights, minorities and children.

July 29th, 2014: Fraternite Notre Dame participated in



a workshop organized by the Direction of the Protection of Children, on various draft documents towards better support to children, notably through the setting up of structures for children in various age groups, including day-care and early learning, and afterschool programs.

September 2014: Fraternite Notre Dame participated in a CONIDE workshop to set up a program and action plan for activities to benefit children in 2015 and 2016.

Fraternite Notre Dame and SOS Village for children were asked to draft the document regulating the case of children that would spend time in an institute.

October 12th, 2014: Fraternite Notre Dame was honored by the World Summit on Women's Foundation, with an award for Creativity Towards Rural Women for 2014. The Award demonstrates the action of Fraternite Notre Dame's Founder, His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik, to uphold and defend human rights, in particular for the less-fortunate, notably children and women in situations of great precariousness, which is typical for rural women in Niger.

November 24th – 26th, 2014: Still upon a CONIDE initiative, Fraternite Notre Dame participated in a workshop on psycho-social support for children.

December 10th, 2014: Fraternite Notre Dame and the high school students of its private educational center, Myriam of Nazareth, participated in the 66th Anniversary Ceremony for the Declaration on Human Rights.

The ceremony was organized by Niger's Ministry of Justice.

December 10th, 2014: Fraternite Notre Dame was invited by the Ministry for Population, the Promotion of Women and the Protection of Children, to an opening ceremony on the fights against early marriage.

During the ceremony, the children of Fraternite Notre Dame center presented a sketch to expose early marriage.

This campaign against the marriage of children in Africa and in Niger was put together by the African Union and Unicef.

Among participants for the ceremony, sponsored by the Republic of Niger's Prime Minister, were the regional Unicef representative, and officials from the African Union. Worth mentioning that early marriage is a real plague in Niger, as the country has the highest rate of children's marriage occurring globally. Various studies conducted in Niger have shown the following:

- 76.3% of young women aged 20-24 are married before they reach 18;
- 28% are married before 15;
- each year, 20.6% of young girls in 15-19 age group

become mothers;

- only 32.6% of teen deliveries occur with aid from medical professionals;
- the death rate for teen mothers in 15-19 age group is 34.4%;
- the risk of dying in their first year for children of under-18 mothers is 60%;
- obstetrical fistula, one of the early marriage consequences, lead many teen mothers to a life of humiliation, social rejection and family disruption, with resources lost in hospitals to find surgical answers to their medical condition.

In keeping with Most Reverend Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik's ethics, Fraternite Notre Dame has been active in Niger since 1996, to help the less-favored sections of the population: children, women, lepers and people in rural areas, through initiatives to foster humanitarian development.

The activities focus on three main areas:

- taking care of children in vulnerable situations;
- promoting quality education for all, without disparities;
- and promoting health for all: with access to quality medical care and nutrition support, a sanitary aid to single mothers and their babies; assistance to families in dire needs.

2. Support to Children in Vulnerable Situations

Since 1997, Fraternite Notre Dame runs a welcome center called "Saint Damian Orphanage" for children experiencing vulnerable social and family situations. Currently, 44 children aged 7 months to 18 years live at the center, located in the Banifandou II neighborhood of Niamey. Most of these children arrived at the center

shortly after birth and required urgent support. We are dealing with:

- children whose mother had died while or following their delivery; in many cases, these were single mothers, and their children rejected by the family, because of some traditional customs or practices. Cases may include children from polygamous families, where rivalry sadly outdoes compassion;



- children born to mothers afflicted with psychological troubles, erring in the streets and rejected by all. There is indeed a lack of reliable support for people with mental illnesses in Niger, as no specialized center exists, apart from the national hospital;
- or children born to minor single mothers, under judiciary protection: in some cases, justice requested Fraternite Notre Dame to keep the children at their welcome center, all the while following up with the young mothers who had returned to their family.

In parallel with internal support, Fraternite Notre Dame provides external support to children in vulnerable situations. In 2014, 213 children benefited from such aid, which takes place in agreement with their families, and adjusting to the family's living conditions.

These children benefit from nutritional assistance, with infant milk formula and adequate food products, along with a follow up, sanitary support and schooling. This is done in support of the requirements of the Convention on Children's Rights, the African Charter of Children's



Rights and Wellbeing, and the recent support policies put together by the Ministry in charge of protecting children, the Unicef and Civil Society. Worth mentioning that Fraternite Notre Dame played a role in the drafting and validation workshops for the latter document.

For its activities in favor of vulnerable children, Fraternite Notre Dame works in partnership with the Ministry in charge of Protecting Children, and in particular, the Direction Generale, Justice for Minor and the Brigade of Minors. Thus, in 2014, upon request from the Brigade of Minors, Fraternite Notre Dame welcomed temporarily three victims who had suffered corporal abuse in their family. The children remained at Saint Damian's Orphanage for the duration of the social inquiry, to determine if they could safely return home. Two of these minors were expatriate children from another African country, and the third one from a European country; all four were finally repatriated to their country of origin.

Besides these activities, Fraternite Notre Dame is a correspondent with Aviation Sans Frontieres, and therefore was able to have two children from destitute families with serious conditions, airlifted to France for medical reasons; aged 6 years and 14 months, both were affected with heart pathologies and could not be treated in Niger.

These 2 children received basic medical care at Fraternite Notre Dame Clinic, and were then referred to car-

diology and pediatrics practices, to secure their subsequent medical assistance free of charge.

About 30 handicapped children were given walkers, crutches and wheel chairs. With help from other partners, Fraternite Notre Dame was able to assist with infant formula and nutrition aid over 100 newborn babies and orphaned infants, all under 12 months of age.

In collaboration with Social Services, Justice and the Brigade of Minors, Fraternite Notre Dame contributed to the family reunification of 15 single mothers and received a mandate to perform a formal social follow up for the young mothers, all the while providing them with child nutritional support.

3. Promoting Quality Education for All

Because he promotes access to quality education for all, His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik is among those who uphold education for all, but with particular emphasis for little girls, young girls and handicapped children.

Meeting the expectations of the population that have understood that education is key to development in Niger, Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik has created a private school complex in Niamey, called Myriam of Nazareth. The development of this educational center was rolled out over several years, as follows:

- 2002: Opening Primary School;
- 2003: Opening Kindergarten;
- 2010: Opening Middle School Grades;



- 2013: Opening the High School Grades.

For the 2014-2015 school year, the educational complex Myriam of Nazareth welcomed close to 850 students, all grades combined. Among the students, many have a very poor family background, some are orphaned children that Fraternite Notre Dame is supporting, while there are also some disabled students, notably 3 students with hearing impairments, 4 with spastic disabilities and 2 children with intellectual deficiencies.

The raw school rate for Niger is 71.1%, and it indicates a clear improvement, but we need specify that urbanized areas have taken a strong lead as opposed to rural regions, while the rate for boys is higher than for girls, who drop out before reaching their Middle School Grades.

Another crucial point still is the level of education their receive. That is why Fraternite Notre Dame's objectives are to provide quality education, adjusting to each child so as to limit failure and dropping out of school.

4. Promoting health for all: neighborhood quality medical care for all.

Started in 2001, Fraternite Notre Dame Clinic offers, to answer the wish of Most Reverend Bishop Jean Marie, sanitary services to all, and especially those lacking resources, who cannot afford quality medical care.

In 2014, the Clinic set up a new section for audiometry consultation, with ability to equip deaf children with hearing aids.

2014 also witnessed the inauguration of a maternity, to allow women to give birth in good conditions, surrounded my medical professionals.

The Clinic offers quality medical services to any person in need. Specifically, the Clinic features general medical consultations, along with the following fields: Gynecology; Pediatrics; Prenatal; Surgery; Ultrasound; Immunization; advanced Laboratory Testings, Nursing and also a modest Hospital Service. People who are destitute can still benefit from complete medical care.

In 2014, the number of patients who were given medical attention and treatment at the Clinic was 14,100 patients, which translates into the following:

- Medical consultations, about 7,300
- Prenatal consultations, close to 100
- Ultrasound scans, about 2,000
- Infant Consultations, close to 4,100
- Patients hospitalized, about 7,300
- Hearing aids to children, about 30

Fraternite Notre Dame opened a maternity financed by the Japanese cooperation. The number of deliveries performed at the premises June to December 2014, was 70.



Opening the maternity allows any woman to give birth in good conditions, and surrounded by medical professionals. Too many women do not benefit from a follow up during pregnancy, and deliver their babies at home without any medical care, which result in risky pregnancies and many deaths while giving birth; actually,

Niger's maternal mortality rate is among the highest in the world.

Therefore, starting the maternity was an answer to one of Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik's deepest concerns, towards the preservation of life for both, mother and child, and this could be achieved by:

- fighting neonatal mortality, and
- fighting deliveries at home and their consequences: fistulas and infections.

40% of very destitute patients are completely taken care of financially by Fraternite Notre Dame. Furthermore, Fraternite Notre Dame also provides medical care and food support free of charge to lepers.

Fraternite Notre Dame's activities extend to Banibangou, a commune located 250 km from Niamey, through medication, clothing and school books donations.

Again, in Makalondi, a village 150 km from Niamey, orphaned babies in the bush benefit from food assistance.

As a conclusion, religious and humanitarian organizations can offer much help to the population of a country, notably in the fields of education and medical care, by providing services free of charge or for a small fee, to aid those that are going through emergency situations or extremely precarious times for their family and economy.

Therefore, our wish is that governments and international entities take into account their positive impact, by facilitating their works in every way at their disposal, towards the common good and social progress of the population.

*For any additional information
or to contact Fraternite Notre Dame:*

<http://www.FraterniteNotreDame.org>

