



The Construction of the SAREPTA Medical Center of Tangafla is advancing well!

June 15th 2019

Dear members, friends and supporters of SAREPTA
Suisse,

It is already June of 2019, only six months left in this year!

With this letter I would like to bring you up to date and give you fresh news of Côte d'Ivoire where the General Secretary just spent four weeks. Thank you for your interest in the project and I hope you will rejoice with me in the progress to date!

Departure for Abidjan

I arrived in Abidjan on the 8th of May as scheduled and spent the night in a guesthouse located in Riviera 3. After several administrative errands in Abidjan from the 9th to the 14th, my next step was to go to Korhogo in the north of the country where Tangafla is located some 37 kilometers from Korhogo.

Departure for Korhogo

On the 15th of May I flew Abidjan-Korhogo without any problems and was met at the airport by M. Soro Guel, who was driving Mom Robin's car in order to transport me to her house where I stayed during my time in the north.

Supervision of the work

The following day, Thursday the 16th of May, I went to Tangafla arriving around 2:35 PM on the project site. I discovered that the foundation was dug and the cement poured but there were no workers on site. The project manager had been called back urgently to Abidjan on business and the workers were waiting for further instructions. The work began rapidly again after a few days.

That next week I arranged a meeting with the project manager and the local SAREPTA committee. We discussed the latrine project which the manager had also directed. Everyone had a chance to state the difficulties encountered and express also the positive points of that project. The result was that there is a real need for better communication between all the parties concerned (the Swiss committee, the local committee in Côte d'Ivoire and the project manager.)

Following this meeting, I went each day to the building site to see the progress of the construction, to ask necessary questions of the project manager and to respond to questions asked of me about the project. The people of the village filled the foundation with dirt but not all participated since it was the period of the year when planting needed to be done since the rainy season was just starting. It was noted that in the future this crucial need for field work should be taken into consideration in order to have better participation of the local population in the project work.

Security at the project site:

I was surprised to see that the workers were not using gloves and asked the project manager to provide them with gloves for their safety as well as closed shoes. The next day gloves and shoes were available but the workers were not using them and did not want to wear them to work in. I insisted that the gloves and shoes be employed while working on site explaining to the workers that it was for their own protection and that it

was obligatory for us to provide these measures and that they needed to take them seriously for their own security. They then proceeded to follow these requirements each day.



Usage of the outdoor latrines and showers:

I also noticed that the workers were not using the latrines to relieve themselves but instead were going into the weeds. I asked the project manager about this in the presence of all the workers. He responded that he had instructed them to make use of the latrines but they would not listen. I then insisted and threatened them with loss of job if these hygiene measures were not respected. I explained that it was for the usage of the site workers during the construction phase that we had built the latrines and showers before the main building. Following this explication and threat, all the workers Complied with this measure of hygiene.

In thinking of these experiences, I am more than ever convinced that it is very important that the Swiss base make these on-site visits to their projects so that we can correct the abnormalities in security and hygiene as needed. It is very possible that the local committee would not pick up on certain poor practices on the building site. These visits on site provide also the opportunity to do some training on important issues as health, hygiene, personal security and development in rural Côte d'Ivoire.

Meeting with the local population

Due to the intense field work during this period of time, I deemed it necessary to put off meeting with the population till a later date. We were however able to discuss with the village chief and the presi-

dent of the village young people. The chief visited the building site every day to see the progress and to encourage the workers. I informed these two leaders that it would be necessary to begin looking for a house to rent for their future nurse who would be hired when the center opened at the end of the year. Both assured me that there would be no problem with finding a place for the nurse.

Observation no 1

During my stay I transported a lady urgently to the Baptist dispensary of Torgo, which is a distance of 42 kilometers from Tangafla so that she could get the necessary treatment for her condition.

Observation no 2

I heard a man tell the story of his wife who went into labour and needed to be transported by him on his motorcycle to the nearest health facility, a distance of 17 kilometers from Tangafla. That distance on moto was an eternity for him as well as for his wife, who cried out to him continually to "go faster!" He was so afraid that she would deliver before they arrived where help was available. He shared how happy he would be to have a functioning medical center right in Tangafla and avoid such experiences in the future. It will be a big relief for the people of the 18 villages of the area and especially the women and children. I heard the same relief expressed by two of the village women, whom I interviewed. They are impatient to see the center open its doors. I asked if they would go there for treatment and they responded immediately: "Certainly! It would be idiotic for us to not use the center!"



Return to trip to Abidjan

On June 3rd I returned to Abidjan and the next day went again to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to check on the progress of our demand for "*établissement en Côte d'Ivoire*", recognition for exoneration. The lady was able to reassure me that it was in the hands of the proper authority. All we can do is to wait. I hope that in a short time we will receive a positive response.

Conclusion

My time was well spent and without a problem of health or travel, etc. I left Abidjan on the 5th of June at 6:55 PM and arrived in Geneva on the 6th at 7:35 AM. We can say that the "train is right on track!"

Thanks to you dear members, friends and supporters of the association, **the objectives of 2019 are in the process of realization. Little by little the bird builds its nest. We hope that, at the latest end of September 2019, the construction of the first part of the center will be completed.**

A BIG THANK YOU from the bottom of our hearts to each of you for your participation in the operation "2000 x 30.-" which continues by the way till the end of the year.

Written from Penthalaz on June 15th 2019



Navigué Pierre SORO
Secretary General of SAREPTA Suisse

Please find below some recent photos of the advancement of the work!

