

Les Infos de Susila Dharma France



N° 4 - Janvier 2008

Appeal

SUSILA DHARMA FRANCE REPRESENTATIVE AT THE ALL AMERICAS MEETING

The most successful Susila Dharma organisations in the north agree that it is essential to always have close contact with one's partners in development, especially in the south. This enables us to understand, monitor and report back effectively to our members.

Because of our limited ability to raise money outside our membership our budget does not allow us to be effective in maintaining a live contact with partner projects. On rare occasions, our board members individually fund their own travel for a visit to projects.

However we are not wealthy.

There is an All Americas SDI meeting in Colombia in July-August (probably July 25th to August 5th). We feel it would help our functioning if we could have representation at this forum as we have been supporting two projects, one in Argentina and one in Colombia for the past few years.

Solen Gratiet has been a board member of Susila Dharma France for several years and has worked hard in communications by using her skills in languages and drawing on her early experience of working in development in South America and Africa.



Solen with children in Brazzaville (Congo)

We would like to ask the members of Subud France to support the costs of sending Solen to this meeting in July 2008.

Thank you

Yours in Subud,

Raphael Bate, Chair of Susila Dharma France

Email: resther44@aol.com

Please send your cheques to Susila Dharma France's treasurer Heather Cooter, whose details are on the last page. Mark your cheques «All Americas»

News in brief

TIERRAVIVA GOES NATIONAL - ARGENTINA OPENS ITS ARMS TO ART AND AWARENESS

Over the past two years the Tierraviva project's Art and Awareness workshops have focused on mother and child bonding with women and children incarcerated in prison in Argentina. Through a process based on arts and drama and taking some inspiration from ICDP (International Child Development Programme) methodology, the participants' self esteem, communication skills and self-awareness are developed and the relationships with their children strengthened. All of this is done within the punitive ambience of the prison regime.



The project will soon be extended throughout Argentina thanks to a partnership with the Penitentiary Attorney's office and the national Union of Civil Servants. In this context, the Tierraviva team has already visited two prisons in two different provinces to make contact, find out what conditions are like, and give some preliminary workshops.

Some of the women prisoners are currently being trained to become facilitators of the programme, which will also help the programme's spread.



Analia Flores, ex-workshop participant, takes the teacher's place

In order to enable this project to plan effectively for their work we pledged to send them 1 500 € per year for two years, but we have not received enough donations to do this.

If you would like to support this project financially, please contact Heather Cooter, whose details are on page 4.

Profile

Solew LEES GRATIET



Born in England in 1968, I joined Subud 12 years ago and have now been living in France for 9 years. I've been a Susila Dharma France board member for about 7 years.

But a life cannot be described in figures and dates alone, so let's get down to business.

It all began in Medellín, Colombia in 1994. Not my life, of course, but my meeting

with Subud – this great spiritual and human adventure which, when I allow it, gives me all sorts of new experiences. It was just after the World Congress in Amanecer. Neither the first nor the last time that I've missed out on something – but at least I did not miss out on Subud.

I had a Colombian friend who joined Subud after the Congress. I noticed some very positive changes in him and was hungry to learn more. However, I was leaving to volunteer in Eritrea, so I had to wait more than another year before being opened, once back in Colombia. At the time I was living near Medellín, so I was part of this group for a while before leaving to live for a year in Swansea. Whilst in Wales I used to go to the Brecon group, and was very surprised later on to find out that many members of this group had gone to live in the Mayenne department of France at around the same time as I'd moved to the Breton coast.

At Swansea I went back to university to study for a masters in social development. I was already 29 and only just finding out which field I wanted to work in. I have always envied those who know what they want to do in life from childhood and who follow their path without detour. All I knew was that I liked writing and learning languages. And then life took me to different countries where I taught English and worked as a volunteer for projects working with street children and underprivileged communities.

Doing this kind of work and discovering developing countries made me realise that I could only be satisfied with my work if it had some kind of meaning, and that to have a meaning, it needed a social aspect. This is why I decided to go back to being a student in the field of international development. Life, however, is full of surprises, and towards the end of my degree I met Jacques, and a few short months later I was married and living in the Breton countryside and had no idea what I could do with my skills and qualifications.

We started a family – two children – and I found work as a linguist and did some freelance journalism. The beautiful and fertile region where I live is, however, a professional desert, especially in my chosen field, and I felt the need to do something useful. I joined the board of Susila Dharma France partly to satisfy this need and partly because it is my way of outwardly expressing the latihan and of giving something in return for this gift I have received.

My role is that of communicating between the SD board and our Latin American projects, centralising email communications and sending them out to the board, and editing

this newsletter. I also do the odd translation for Susila Dharma International.

Professionally, I currently hold an administrative and communications post in an adoption charity, which has been an enriching experience in a controversial and fascinating field. My job has also permitted me to travel to several, mainly African, countries. My time with this organisation is now coming to an end, however. Perhaps now I will have time to carry out my SD functions better – and who knows what the Boss has in store for me in the future ...!

Our partners - latest news

As ever, we would like to thank our donors, whose generosity has allowed us to continue supporting our partner projects in Africa, America and Asia. This year you gave us almost 11,000€, which has enabled us to help our partners in the following ways:

ARGENTINA:

Tierraviva (Buenos Aires): See article on page 1

CONGO RDC:

Ecole Albadi (Bas-Congo) : See article on page 3

At last, Armand's shed is free !

Medical furniture that was collected three years ago in Paris, has been successfully sent to the Congo (RDC) and distributed to four SD clinics after innumerable bureaucratic obstacles were overcome. These articles were stored in Armand's back garden but Armand's shed is now free!

COLOMBIA:

El Refugio (Bogotá) :

Transforming weapons into jewels - an involuntary break

2007 was a disappointing year for El Refugio after the hopes raised by an acceptance of its proposal by the OIM (International Migration Organisation) to run a training course for young people demobilised from the armed conflict. The funding for this project is apparently not yet in place, but there is hope that it will arrive in 2008!

Otherwise, the team has contracts with several agencies for the retailing of its work and, while waiting for some positive results, SDF continues to give the project moral support.

INDONESIE :

YUM - "scavenger" children benefit from Pondock's first library.

SDF helped build the only library for poor children, many the children of "scavengers" for recyclable waste, at YUM's Learning Centre project in Pondok Aren, Jakarta. This small library has recently been granted support, from the 1% Development Fund, to expand the facility.

VIETNAM :

SD Vietnam continues its work to mobilise its members to carry out social actions. Regular reports are sent to SDI describing donations (of food, materials and money) made to children's hospitals and schools, flood victims and other underprivileged communities in different regions and provinces. SDV hopes to start a small school and is looking for premises and funding.

To make a donation to one of these projects or towards our running costs, please contact our treasurer, Heather Cooter, whose details are on page 4.

Up close

NO CRYING - THEY JUST GOT ON WITH IT ... ALBADI SCHOOL, CONGO RDC

Following extensive flood damage to their recently built school (see *les Infos* # 2), Albert, Rosa and the orphan students of Albadi school have made heroic efforts to rebuild their school, with financial help from SD International, SD Norway and the Blond Trust.



Background

Albadi is an abbreviation of *Aleke Banza Diato*. It comes from the Kikongo, the language spoken in the West in the Lower Congo province. It means: children-ideas-our, that is our idea (project) for the children, or, *Help Children*.

Albadi is an initiative of Albert and Rose

Diluambanzila. Married, both members of the Inkisi Subud group, they form the Parent Home. Rose is a helper in the group and Albert is the National SES co-ordinator. Albert is a former Jesuit and worked in Rwanda and the Burundi.

Albadi is a home for orphans that has existed for 5 years. There are now 10 child boarders. They are organizing some modest income generating activities. The objectives of the project are:

to recreate a framework where the opportunities of the human being are valued by acknowledging the dignity, the freedoms and the greatness of the children.

- To offer a natural family area for the education of children and teen-agers.
- To look after children born to parents who are victims of sexually transmitted diseases.
- To offer a vocational training framework.
- To try and solve educational problems with applied pedagogy.

Susila Dharma France's role

SDF has sent financial support to supply books and furniture for the school.

If you would like to support this project with a donation, please contact Heather Cooter, whose details are on page 4.

A word from the treasurer

We have had a very successful year, crowned by a very large donation for projects in Indonesia. This last was prompted by Olvia's visit to Paris in August, and is a measure of the confidence inspired by Olvia's capability and efficiency.

SDF received in *zakat* 1,290€, of which 645€ went to ASF for their Entraide fund. We made a total of 695.50€ from various activities (sale of honey, SDB&B, tombola and brocante). Our level of subscriptions is high (2,826€); and after Congress and our appeal for non-earmarked funds, we finished the year with a total of 5,881€ in non-specific funds. Our expenses, while high, are covered by the subscriptions, so there are no 'overhead' charges on your donations.

This year due to a late donation from the Guerrand Hermes Foundation we will be able to pay our subscription to SDI at the beginning of the year, and hope to be able to help RDC with some of their desperately needed school costs while waiting for your 2008 donations to arrive.

In addition, after the agreement reached at Congress, we intend to use the money previously held for a Retirement Home for those projects specified by the donors, and to start a new deposit account to give SDF some stability in funding.

Support to projects

We received 735€ for Mithra, and sent 1000€ in August, part of which was to help pay for their admirable creation of a summit conference in Bangalore with other small pan-Indian NGOs to encourage the achieving of Millenium goals. We also sent 600€ to Anisha separately for their work with slum families.

For the Congo, we received 875€ in earmarked funds, and sent 1,469€ - 1,000€ for books and materials to Albadi, following our receiving at La Source last year; and 400€ to pay for the customs and transport fees for the medical equipment we sent late last year. We have also paid 69€ for the purchase and postage of onion seeds requested by the Lemba Imbu school for their vegetable patch which provides some resources for the school.

SDF received 11,485€ earmarked for Indonesia/IRDN/YUM including a large anonymous donation of 10,000€ towards the appointment of an Indonesian teacher of English, the enlargement of 'our' library, and the support of the school at Rungan Sari. We have also forwarded funds for sponsoring scholarships for children from poor families to attend school for a year. This year French members have supported 30 children, sending the funds via SDF (the advantage being that donors are entitled to tax relief and SDF carries the transfer costs, thus helping the recipient).

We sent 500€ to El Refugio, more than we had received (135€). We have promised to send another 500€ in 2008 if the project shows positive results. We promised Tierraviva 1500€, which we sent despite only receiving 310€ in donations. We received and sent on 1,600€ for Vietnam, and now hold a further 1,200€ which will be passed on by Western Union in January.

Thank you!

I would like to thank yet again all our donors and members of SDF, who have so generously given of their time and money to help others less fortunate and often in great distress. The light of the latihan shines through your *jivas* into the world.

Heather Cooter, treasurer

Do you have an inspiring or illuminating experience you would like to share with us? Something that has helped you follow the path of Susila Budhi Dharma in your life, or an experience which has flowed from the latihan?

We believe that the work of Susila Dharma encompasses any activity carried out in the spirit of «Susila» and «Dharma» and not just those carried out in the context of the SD organisations.

Please share with us your experiences! (see contact details at the bottom of the page).

Our stories

L'ESPRIT DU CHEMIN*

Raphael Bate, SDF's chair, recently walked half of the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage. Here are some of his thoughts during his inspiring walk.

Folded into the Pyrenees, l'Esprit du Chemin embraces pilgrims in motherly love,
For she respects the sacred intention of each soul.

The Day of Ascension. With our many brothers and sisters from all continents,
We begin the Camino quest with a mixture of focused submission

On the Route Napoleon we slowly ascend for five hours into the Pyrenees of our hearts with our comrades: hope, alertness and joy.

A Korean family ascends the magnificent road.
The father puts plasters on the sore shoulders of an old Norwegian sailor, run aground at the roadside.

High in the Pyrenees, through ancient beech forest, we submit to the welcome of Roncevalles, great high home of the soul.
Tears flow in gratitude after the intensity of our first climb

Quietly, we depart the albergue.
The first chapter is the sacred silent walk, the darkness nursing our inner selves.
The crisp moon and bright stars our companions, heralding a new day.

The sunrise, amber and gold, rewards our silent walk: it is as though we are orchestrated with these ordinary momentous events,
Our daily ritual of the camino.

Long shadows precede us, rich textures of the warm earth,
Flaxen fields of shorn wheat, scooped valleys and heaving hills.
Brilliant eastern sun dazzles and illumines the ancient villages,
Atop the hill with spires pointing heavenwards.

Elias from Lichtenstein (a rare name from a rare state).
Young Elias embodies open generosity.
He has been sent to demonstrate non judgemental love through giving.
He starts by offering yogurts that he has hauled up the mountain.
In the evening he buys the ingredients for supper and shares it with six people and a Chinese boiled egg-eating pilgrim.



Before he goes to sleep on the roof he gives his sleeping mat to a homeless pilgrim.

In his rucksack he keeps a book by a Bulgarian mystic.

Gone to Heaven in Granon

I can hardly bring myself to describe or think about my experience at the church of St John the Baptist Albergue annexe.

On arrival we pilgrims were greeted with chilled water and melon, were helped off with our burdens and led to our beds.
Throughout the evening the three volunteer hosts attended to our minutest needs with a quality of love and caring that I have not seen before.

The love of God was overflowing out of them; no sense of duty, but spontaneous, with light heartedness and joy.

There was a session, for all who wished, in the candle lit choir gallery. A service of dedication for the pilgrims, affirming their purpose for the journey and sharing their needs and hopes for the quest.

It brings to me now a yearning for a fullness of heart that overflows from a deep source that seems to have been blocked for many years.
It needs to flow through, around and over protections and diversions that stop the love of God coming through

me.

The glory of Borgos cathedral was nothing to the perfect simplicity of this Albergue at Granon..

Why do I make life so complicated?

(* Hostel for Pilgrims at the foot of the French Pyrenees in St Jean Pied de Port.)



Raphael Bate and friend

You comments / suggestions are all very welcome! We also welcome: articles, ideas for articles, letters, photos...

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