

1 October 2009

## EMERGENCY APPEAL

### **MORE REBEL ATTACKS & FAMINE IN SUDAN**

Dear Friend of IRT,

It is barely eight months since I wrote to you with an urgent request to support the emergency relief work of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in the town of Nzara, South Sudan. Our donors were very generous and we were able to support the Sisters in helping literally thousands of Congolese refugees, who had come to Sudan after being brutally forced from their homes by the rebels of the infamous Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

How much I would like to report that there is now peace in the area and that the refugees have been able to return home to re-build their lives. Tragically this is not the case. In fact the LRA is now also attacking villages in Sudan, forcing thousands more people to flee their homes and seek safety in the towns. One of these towns is Nzara, which is at least protected by the Sudanese army.

The Comboni Sisters are still helping these unfortunate people, both the Congolese refugees and the Sudanese farmers forced out of their villages. The Sisters, together with the local women from the Nzara community, have opened up their Women's Centre to receive the refugees who arrive on a daily basis. They provide food, blankets, clothes and other necessities. Those who are sick are taken to the Sisters' small hospital where they can be properly treated.



*Sr. Giovanna Calabria, head of the Comboni Sisters' community in Nzara, with a refugee baby from Congo. She is desperately afraid that famine will mean yet more suffering for people who have suffered enough already.*

*Last week Sr. Giovanna wrote to us of increasing LRA violence: "Yes, like the people, we Sisters too are sometimes afraid, when it gets dark and we are told the LRA are near, we are hardly able to sleep, we pray, we peep through the window to see if they are coming. When morning comes and nothing has happened we thank the Lord and we start our work."*

As well as telling me of the terror everyone feels, Sister Giovanna is also telling me of food shortages in the region because the Sudanese farmers, fearing attack, have had to leave their plots of land. **Already children are starting to suffer from malnutrition and the food stocks purchased by the Sisters, using funds received from IRT, are running dangerously low.**

Sister Giovanna is desperately appealing to IRT. She wants to bring in food and supplies from Uganda, which has an abundance of food, but she can only do this with our help.

IRT gets so many requests each year and it is always a dilemma to decide which projects to support. I know we have recently helped the Sisters' emergency work in Nzara but we cannot let them down at this time of dire need. Not only do they provide aid and comfort to the people arriving in the town but they also risk their lives visiting the areas attacked by the rebels to see what they can do for the sick and injured who are hiding in the bush.

### **IRT cannot and will not let them down**

Please help us to help them if you possibly can. It is expensive for us. The quantities of food required are large. Added to this, we still need to provide cooking pots, utensils, soap, blankets, plastic sheets and, where possible, to build huts. We also need to provide medicines for the Comboni Hospital. Without you we cannot do anything but together we can save the lives of thousands of people whose plight is being overlooked by the world.

### **A Remarkable Story of Triumph over Adversity**

Sister Giovanna has sent me many stories. Most are tragic and heartbreaking but many are also testament to the enduring human spirit and, ultimately, to the triumph of love and compassion over evil. I cannot mention them all, and many are simply too upsetting to write down, but here is one which sums up what is happening in the region:

Sister Giovanna writes: *"Early in the morning I decided to go and visit one of the villages recently attacked by the rebels. The road from Nzara to the village was full of people, carrying their belongings. The lucky ones had bicycles. I was touched to see many children and old people walking with difficulty. A child was trying to pull a goat, which wasn't eager to move, an old man was holding two chickens, all his possessions. I went to visit the home of one of the volunteers who works with us in Nzara. He had lost everything and was sobbing like a child. His wife had been killed. Luckily the day before he had sent their children to stay with a relative".* Sister Giovanna has now found a place for the man and his children to stay in Nzara.



For my part I hope to visit Nzara again soon. I think it is vitally important that the Sisters know we care and that we will stand shoulder to shoulder with them in their fight to save lives.

**Please, if you possibly can, make a donation so that we may do what we can to support the Sisters in their work. We cannot sit back while more children suffer like this little girl.**

Thank you,

*Adrian Hatch*

Adrian Hatch  
Chief Executive