



FLOOD !

Gode, Somali Region, Ethiopia.

Advent/Christmas 2023.

Dear Friends of the Mission,

As I write, we are finally in the same season, for once! Since we shall not have the possibility of Holy Mass at the time of the Ethiopian Christmas, in January 7th, but would be able to have Holy Mass for Christmas on December, 25th, we decided to shift our calendar and so we are presently in the second week of Advent!

Since I last wrote we have had lots of excitements and happenings with the rain which came plentifully this year and because it rained so much everywhere the rivers overflowed their banks and we were flooded! After begging everyone to pray for rain, we felt not a little embarrassed to ask the Lord if he would be a little less generous with the water flow!

It was a little frightening as we saw the water overflow right up to the wall to the upper fields! The river brought with it 70cm of sand and mud into the lower fields where the bananas are planted. So we have a huge work ahead of us to dig around the trees, now suffocated under the mud and the sand...A very generous benefactor from Europe has donated the money we need to employ five more workers for two months as well as buy



Water water everywhere!



Buried Bananas!

the shovels, hoes and wheelbarrows we will need to clear the sand from around the trees. In the beginning it looked as though we would lose the banana plantation, but maybe only a third of the bananas will be lost. The moringa trees which were doing so well really did not like the amount of water that they were inundated with and so began to wilt sadly, although their leafless branches still stand. The only trees that loved the surplus watering were the mango trees which suddenly went 'mad' growing branches all over the place, as can be seen below. A tricky moment was as the water approached our motor pump.



Sad moringa trees

Our volunteers and workers rushed to try to rescue the pump, lifting the heavy machinery above the water level. We are so lucky to have such prompt and generous co-workers... without



Mad Mango!



Panic with the motor pump

whom we would have lost an important tool for our work here.

From water to drought!

St Michael's School have generously donated to us the funding for our irrigation project, whereby we are able now to bring water from the river to the upper fields of our compound and where we now have thriving papaya, moringa trees, as well as beans, cucumber, sweet potato, cassava, all of which were well watered by the rain which fell, but now after the beginning of the dry season, three weeks ago need to be irrigated. We have just begun

planting the newly irrigated fields and hope in the future to grow tomatoes as well. We learn that everything takes time and so we go slowly. The 'set back' of the flood teaches us to review constantly, and adjust accordingly. Though this has been a difficult time I am sure that the Lord has plans for us.

We have not only been busy 'farming' vegetables and fruit, but also working with our beloved people. I have been a little overwhelmed with the number of people who come to our gate daily, often walking between five/eight kilometres to ask us for work, or for help. Recently we have been able to send three women and their children to their home villages, with the help of the Missionaries of Charity, in a town more than 550 km away from us. They stay with the sisters until either they have given birth, or their children are able to undertake the arduous journey to their homes.



Part of 40 kg of home grown sweet potatoes



Newborn Hussein

Unfortunately we cannot help more people than we do at the moment: we have 20 women training to learn weaving, seven women working with the children, in the kitchen and cleaning, eleven men working in the field, looking after the goats, and the fields around the house; and two graduates working as teachers of 47 children; a volunteer and myself brings the total to 89 in the compound! We have recently had two births, the mothers recovering after safe deliveries.

I think that we could do so much more, if we had the personnel, but for now, I think that we should do what we do as well as we can rather than spread ourselves out in ways that we would not be able to do the work well. A sign that this is the correct

approach is the great improvement we have noted in the children since the summer when we had volunteer graduates to tutor them, in small groups of three or four, we notice their rising confidence, their ability to write (in both amharic and somali), their pride in getting their simple arithmetic marked with a star and 'excellent'! My only sadness is that this is the proof, that if these children had a proper school they would do even better!



Newborn Hawo; we managed to get the mother to change the name from 'Moftwa' (Your father did not want you) to Hawo,

Once again thanks for all the financial help, prayers, and love given to us over this year. We wish you and your families God's blessings for \Christmas and the New Year!



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More news in the next 'Fragments'!

God Bless You,

Sr Mary Joachim and all at the Catholic Mission in Gode!