

Les Enfants du Désert



The humanitarian association fights against the malnutrition of the children of districts discriminated by Atar in Mauritania

Since 2000, the association "Children of the desert" finances seven nutrition centres (helping 480 children) in the city of Atar. These centres are all located in the poorest districts of the city, and two nutrition centers (180 children) in the oasis of Ouadanne.

Little by little, the association has been able to improve conditions in the area; the children are clean, thus less often sick. Children learn to play, and to laugh. The results are limited and therefore it is essential that the association enlarges our capacities, to ensure that these children are never hungry.



ORIGINS AND HISTORY

Two friends, Salma Mint Matallah and Geneviève Courbois, were made aware of the malnutrition and the associated child development risks of the infantile population of certain districts of Atar. These two friends finalized in December 1999, in collaboration with the City Hall of Atar and regional authorities, a project to fight against malnutrition.

An experimental project was launched in February 2000 with the opening of a centre in the district of Twevendae, for 30 children and their mothers. This project was made possible by gifts from Mauritanian and French benefactors. It was immediately apparent that this project had a positive effect. In order to continue this work and if possible to spread into more of the community, it was necessary to create a formal organization based on voluntary work and limited operating costs. This meant that an effective control of the use of all donations. On 1st July 2000, the humanitarian and non-profit association "The Children of the Desert" was launched (loi 1901), headquartered at l'île de ré, France.

VOLUNTARY WORK

One of the fundamental principles governing the association is voluntary work and volunteers.

The Children of the desert offers you the opportunity to act. We are all volunteers.

Expenses occurred during our work (plane ticket, hosting, food) are at our expense.

We dedicate the near totality of the funds of the association (more than 90 % of the collected sums) to the children of Atar, by limiting drastically our overheads. All the people who work in France to find funds or who come to Atar make it gracefully and humbly. The impact of their presence is very important.

It is essential that this movement develops, to intensify the work and assure a continuity in the medical and sanitary domain, in particular.

Join the Children of the Desert to take care of the children and sensitize the mothers in good hygiene practices, support the Mauritanian women in charge and guide them in the use of first aid.

ASSOCIATION 'S CONTACT :

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COMMITMENT

Work with conviction, realism and humility



The commitment of the association is not limited to the emergency response and nutrition. Work undertaken is supported by a knowledge of the region and sanitary condition. The association is sensitive that the work carried out should not impact on the traditional life.

From the beginning, the children of the desert made a commitment: to WELCOME in a centre the mothers and their children in order to ASSURE a nutritional follow-up, by the daily distribution of a rich porridge (1000 kcal, UNICEF type) using locally purchased flours and products, to IMPROVE the sanitary conditions of the children by educating the mothers in personal hygiene, to find and FOLLOW UP any minor medical complaints especially infectious illnesses of the skin and eyes, to SCREEN for any serious illnesses such as tuberculosis, to INSTRUCT and give responsibilities to the women in the management of the centres

PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT

Without which nothing is possible

The collaboration between the association and local authorities is permanent since the launch of the project.

On 1st March 2005, a protocol signed between the municipality of Atar and the Children of the Desert assured the activity of the association and spread its work to all the centres of the city (seven centres receiving 480 children daily) and in the Oasis of Ouadane (two centres receiving 180 children daily).

The Children of the Desert receive grants from numerous private individuals, various companies and associations sensitive to the problems faced by the deprived populations of this region. Amongst all, we thank in particular the commitment of :

Santé 5 Continents (Tours), AOUBRE (Flassans), pharmacy students at the University of Angers, students at the Dental University of Nantes who regularly participate in the care of the children, as well as the participation of such organisations as the IDRAC Business School, the Golf Club of Mormal, (Preux au Sart), AFRICA Run, Tiers-Monde de Beaufort, the fire brigade of Touques, the agency EXAEQUO communication, the association Rencontres (Chambéry) and Salima Voyages (in Atar)...



DURABILITY Looking further than emergency by developing sustainable projects

The accomplishments made by the association remain fragile and the results although constantly increasing (30 children helped in 2000, approximately 660 at present) are insufficient in face of the needs of the population. The funds operated by the association, whether human (volunteers) or especially financial (annual budget of about 30 000 Euros) are indeed limited.

Improvements should be targeted to :

- 1) inviting more children to benefit from the health-giving fight against malnutrition.
- 2) complementing the meals already distributed with the distribution of a supplementary meats and vegetables based meals.

- 3) developing the work done on sanitary conditions by providing a permanent presence of volunteers (doctors, nurses, dentists) and to the formation of nurse's aides and Mauritian nutritionists.

- 4) providing children with the benefits of early-learning games given by assistants formed by volunteers.

- 5) launching micro-projects in cooperation with local associations: such as the project of the Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) farm developed in partnership between the EDD, Mauritanian Association of promotion of the Youth and Sport and the French association EDEN. Blue-green algae found to be the food the richest in proteins.

THE CHILDREN OF THE DESERT'S NEEDS

The association dedicates the quasi-totality of funds (more than 90% of the collected donations) by drastically limiting its overheads.

TOTAL COST FOR EVERY CENTRE PER MONTH

Food : 125 Euros
Employee costs : 120 Euros
Rent and utilities (house, gas, water) : 38 Euros
Hygiene Cost : 11 Euros
TOTAL COSTS : 294 EUROS

COST FOR 9 CENTRES (660 CHILDREN)

2 646 EUROS PER MONTH
= 31 752 EUROS PER YEAR

Due to the continuously growing needs of the population, it is imperative to arrange for the delivery of one complete meal at lunch for the children. This has become our most pressing objective. There is no end to the number of the weakest children in dire need of food (2 months: 2 kg/5 pounds; 11 months: 6 kg/13lb). We often end up feeding the whole family because every member suffers from extreme nutritional deficiency. We do what we can with what we have.

OTHER NEEDS FOR THE CENTRES' CHILDREN

Diseases which we encounter most commonly :

Malnutrition, cutaneous diseases due to the lack of hygiene, diseases of eyes due to the sand, tuberculosis, burns (very frequent). Regrettably Mauritania is a country which needs everything...

- Mothers who can no longer breastfeed due to lack of food : 1st age (infant) powdered milk and 2nd age (toddlers) powdered milk

Feeding-bottles and nipples, Flour such, High protein foodstuffs.

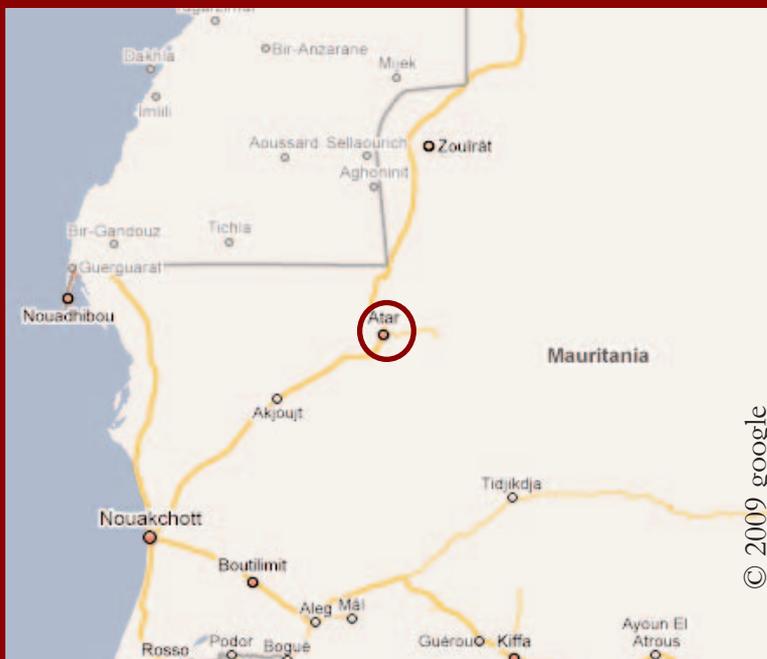
Medicines :

Polyvitamines, Vitamin C, Ferrous Sulphate, Mebendazole, Paracetamol, Biocidan (Eye drops), Physiological Serum (salt solution), Bandages, Antibiotic cream (type Fucidine), Cream against burns, Antifungal cream for scabies, Diapers/nappies, Shampoo, anti-lice and normal.

Other needs :

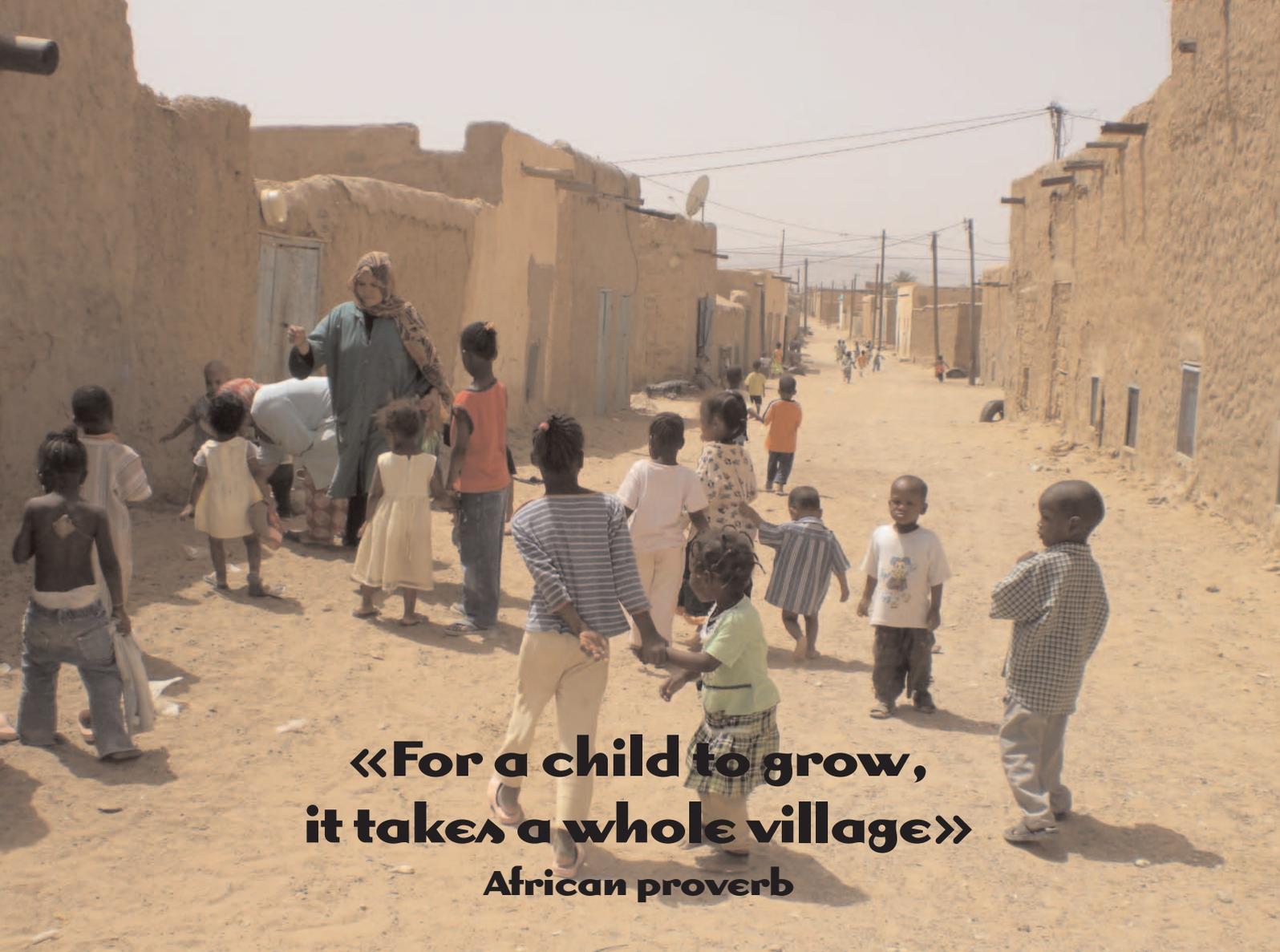
Clothing for the cold (0 -8 years old) and blankets (towels, rags).

Color pencils and felt-tip pens, Stationery, Notebooks, Toys (all types).



Atar in Mauritania

Atar is located in the mountains 500 km (300 miles) from the capital, Nouakchott. It is a city consisting essentially of nomads who became urbanized following numerous years of drought. They had to relocate when they lost their herds and their source of income. There are numerous one-parent families (divorces are easy here) and women often have in their care as many as 5 to 8 children without any resource other than God ("the Mulana").



**«For a child to grow,
it takes a whole village»
African proverb**

**You can help us and make your contribution to support the
work already undertaken and allow for its expansion.
We thank you profoundly for your help.**

***Giving a porridge and a sanitary and medical follow-up
to a child comes to only 6 Euros a month.***



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