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Missionary Animation



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Niger: Preaching without preaching



Dear friends,

For us Salesians, the poorest and most abandoned are the most important, just as for Jesus the Good Shepherd, who leaves the 99 to find even the last and lost sheep. I remember as a young missionary of 21 years of age, I lived in a new presence among the poorest in Ghana, West Africa, in a shanty town. We gathered street children. And as a first step, we organized games and study for the children, but we also accompanied those who were sick to the hospital. Thanks to benefactors who sent a lot of aid, including medicines and medical supplies, the local doctors treated our children well. Thanks to Don Bosco, who sent the first missionaries 150 years ago, we have many presences throughout the world today not only to educate and evangelize the poorest but also to provide health services. So that the neediest, especially the most vulnerable children, can receive medical care that they could not afford, because only rich countries have free healthcare systems.

Géza SDB

■ Bro. Géza Nádurvari SDB, RCMA (Regionale Coordinator of Missionary Animation) for the Central and North Europe region), provincial economist and secretary of UNG

In 2023, we opened our first Salesian mission in Niger. **"Why Niger?"** someone asked me. "Why should we go to a country that is 99% Muslim, extremely poor, and where Christians are a 'persecuted' minority?" The answer is simple: because the bishops invited us and believe in the transformative power of Don Bosco's educational charism. Second, because 58% of Niger's total population is under 18 years of age. For us Salesians, this is our most fertile 'promised land'. Surely, **'Don Bosco is for Niger and Niger is for Don Bosco!'** And Niger needs everything: education, vocational training, social initiatives and spiritual support. We cannot preach Christ openly, it is true, but it does not matter. We will preach him 'implicitly', through the witness of our lives. We are not allowed to build churches and openly offer religious education, but we can build spiritual bridges by opening vocational schools, preparing young people for the world of work. In this field, we Christians and Muslims speak the same language. In Niger, we are called to **educate young people in peace and tolerance, dialogue and forgiveness**. We cannot speak about Christ, but we can speak openly about Don Bosco and the Preventive System. We can preach the Gospel of kindness and reason. We can take care of children and young people, the poor, the sick and the elderly. The way we relate to people is our initial proclamation of the Gospel. This is the key to Salesian work in Niger: "preaching without preaching!"

■ Fr Jorge Mario Crisafulli SDB
General Councilor for the Missions

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

- How does the experience in Niger challenge us to rethink what is evangelization?
- What does it mean to trust in the "transforming power" of Don Bosco's educational charism?



- INF
- Rector Major Fr Fabio Attard has decided that the missionary sending of the 157th expedition of the SDB and the 149th expedition of the FMA will take place on Saturday, 17 October 2026, from the Basilica of Valdocco.

IN LUBUMBASHI: A HOSPITAL WITH THE HEART OF DON BOSCO



Dear Fr Deogratias, what percentage of patients at the Salesian hospital in Lubumbashi are children and adolescents? What are the most common diseases?

The Afia Don Bosco Hospital is a Salesian healthcare facility located in the city of Lubumbashi. Founded in 1988 by Fr Willy Bonduel SDB, this hospital brings together various services such as emergency care, intensive care, internal medicine, surgery, gynecology-obstetrics, dermatology, physiotherapy, pediatrics and patient transport by ambulance... Children and adolescents account for approximately 30% of patients, compared to adults. The most frequently consulted age group is between 0 and 17 years old, while the age group of hospitalized children is between 0 and 5 years old. The most common causes are acute respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases and malaria. All these conditions are treated appropriately thanks to the state-of-the-art technical equipment (laboratory, diagnostic imaging, pharmacy) available within the hospital.



How do you manage to recruit qualified personnel for this job, and to what extent are the SDBs involved?

For recruitment, the Afia Don Bosco Hospital relies on specialist doctors who have already proven themselves in the city (university and non-university); currently, this facility has 34 specialist doctors. However, agents or healthcare personnel must pass an admission test and undergo at least two years of professional medical training. The Afia Don Bosco Hospital is assisted by Salesian priests, who play an important role in the administration and moral and spiritual support of the sick, but also in the terminal phase of their lives. In addition, the support of the SDB translates into the acceptance of free care for the children of destitute parents, street children and other cases of insolvency.



Where do you find the energy to do such demanding and often depressing work?

Medical work is demanding and stressful, so medical staff (doctors, nurses) and non-medical staff draw their energy from Christ through the Blessed Sacrament, which is exposed 24 hours a day. In fact, most of the healthcare staff are Catholic and often begin their day with a moment of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. The Eucharistic celebration is held every day at 12:00 or 17:00. In summary, the Afia Don Bosco Hospital is a Salesian healthcare institution that contributes to the well-being of the Congolese and foreign populations. Particular attention is given to the most fragile patients, such as children and adolescents.



■ Interview with Fr Deogratias Murhula SDB, Deputy Administrator at the Don Bosco Polyclinic in Lubumbashi

M Approximate Annual Deaths of Children

Cause	Approx. Annual Deaths	Age Group Mostly Affected
Neonatal & perinatal conditions	~2,300,000	Mostly <1 month
Diarrheal diseases	~1,500,000	Under 5
Malnutrition (direct or indirect)	~1,000,000	Under 5
Pneumonia (respiratory infections)	~900,000+	Primarily under 5
Malaria	~400,000	Under 5
Tuberculosis	~250,000	Under 15
Injuries (traffic, drowning)	Hundreds of thousands	5-14 years



**FEBRUARY
SALESIAN
MISSIONARY
INTENTION**

ILLNESS

For children with incurable diseases

[Prayer intention of Pope Leo XIV]

Let us pray that children suffering from incurable diseases and their families receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength and hope. [Salesian missionary prayer intention]

NIGER

