

NOUAKCHOTT October 27, 2014

Daily report. (5)

Silent suffering.

Everybody knows about the tensions in this part of the world. Surely, the danger is coming closer. Here no-one talks about it, even the word Ebola is not mentioned. But the concerns are there. With anyone. It is noticeable.

This morning at breakfast Vanmorgen Demba told us that the border between Mali and Senegal is closing. Everyone understands what he means, although this is the only thing he tells us.

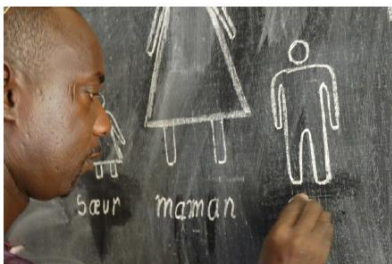


Around the corner at Maison des Sourds I found this girl. She is about 18 years old. She lies on a mat outside the house and her mother is trying to take care of her. She is not well. I have decided to help her. But how?

And then ordinary life, the training. A huge success. Probably the right place and the right time. After years of dripping information and much opposition now apparently a breakthrough. What also helps is that the parents may choose to use a Arabic or French orientation for the deaf children.

This makes education a lot easier. They can choose the language closest to them and later perhaps complement with the other official language in this country. It is difficult for a hearing child to grow up bilingual and often trilingual here (the parents and the villagers speak their traditional local language). In addition, Arabic and French script is totally different, which makes it more difficult.

It is the first time that such training for teachers and people involved is given. The group is still complete. All are or teacher or university trained, with the exception of three deaf participants, one of whom has difficulty to follow the program because he is barely lingual. But with help from the others and the visualization he has access to the information.



The training program Langue Colorée is closed and has stirred much. People, now, have an other perspective to children, to deafness and at each other.

The media have paid much attention to the training (TV radio internet-newspaper magazines etc.) both here and in the Netherlands.

Two more TV broadcasts to come, talk shows in local languages Pulaar and Wolof. That is nice for people who do not speak French or Arabic.

We hope that this focus helps to make the public aware of the need that deaf children have the right to education.

We are intensively in negotiation over this. We have appointments with the relevant ministers, parliament and the inspection of education. In 2016 we hope to start with a budget of the government for paying salaries.

It is extremely interesting to teach the lessons in pedagogy. Discussions started no one ever expected. Certainly not in this country that is so not open. The information is taken in and own points of view are defended but often let go. Especially young people, but also the elderly, see opportunities for teaching differently then they are used to.



A statement of one of the teachers: "I struggled for four years and thought teaching deaf children is something impossible. I thought they were stupid and unmanageable. I yelled at them and beat them, because of my frustration. I regret that. But now I see opportunities and I am fully committed to this process. "

Many others of the group agree. And a discussion about punishment in class started. Other topics such as respect, girls and boys in the same class, black and Arab children in the same class?

Even subjects like religion and sexuality are not shunned. Everything happens within their own cultural rules.

Only on half of the program is done, but every day I enjoy working with the students and see how their judgments changes.

Warm greetings from Mauritania,  
Woodi Wiljo Oosterom Bah.