

SOLIDARITY THAT HEALS

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In a piece of this beautiful world, located in Africa, a new stage had begun. When the clock struck punctually at 00:00 hours of that day, children, young people and adults took to the streets, overflowing with such joy like the waters of the Indian Ocean, and dressed in resplendent white robes that illuminated even the darkest spots, both in large cities and in the most remote areas. The beautiful beaches on the coast concentrated thousands of these angels, in an authentic pyrotechnic show that had taken place in the atmosphere. Screams of joy here and there, congratulations, hugs and renewal of mutual vows of prosperity, were what was seen and heard most in these places. It was the traditional celebration of the arrival of a new year. The beginning of a new journey for that nation.

So it happened in Xigubo too, a small poor area located in that part of the world. Two great friends, Mavuve and Ngoko, lived here. Together they had celebrated the achievements made in the previous year, and wished for great conquests also for the year that began. “Welcome to the new year ... Happy new year to everyone,” sang Ngoko. “Oh... yes! The year that ended was super fantastic for us. Having participated in the exchange and training in the USA has enabled us to solve the various problems that afflict our people and, perhaps, the world in general,” said Mavuve. “Yeah ... really friend! May this new year also be one of great achievements and victories.”

Mavuve and Ngoko were very intelligent, visionary and, above all, dreamers, despite being from a disadvantaged social background. They were born and raised in that village, involved in environments of poverty, hunger, chronic malnutrition and low levels of schooling. Due to their brilliant school performance and imagination the previous year, they had won a scholarship to participate in an exchange programme in the USA, which increased their hope that one day they would make a major contribution to building a society of peace, security and fairness, in their homeland, as well as in the whole world!

Everything started when, in that same year, a strange bug named Corona visited this nation. However small it seemed, it had the wings of a great dragon, which allowed it to reach that nation in record time, coming from places so far away. Unfortunately, this bug was not a bearer of good news on his visit to that people. It had dark well-defined goals! It intended to weaken and overthrow the state's sovereignty, take the King's seat and, finally, begin to dictate new rules and norms of co-existence. Curiously, even the country's army troop could not stop it. Indeed, the country's autonomy was confiscated by this bug. The authorities were all shaken and a new law was enacted: whoever tried to resist the law did very badly. The bug installed in that place a great disease, highly infectious and deadly, that forced everyone to stay in their homes. The contagion levels were so high that there were an average of two hundred infections per day.

Mavuve and Ngoko, who were in the project creation phase after the exchange in the USA, saw in the middle of this situation caused by the bug, a ready opportunity to invest their knowledge and skills in creating a solution. It was thus, that at the end of two weeks, they completed the elaboration of a sanitary-

economic restoration program, which they called ‘Real Change’, because they believed that it would be a way of effecting real and profound changes!

The government and the authorities carried out a series of actions to combat this disease, but it did not take long to prove to be a failure. Apparently, the people were on the edge of the precipice, not to mention that they had already plunged into it. The elite wanted to escape, but they were unhappy when they realised that the situation abroad was also out of control, perhaps worse. Everyone was confined in their home, living in fear. An authentic chaos was established in the country, the new concern became the search for a way to stop the bug and restore order in the territory, an issue that proved difficult to resolve because the bug had a genetics that was new for all.

In the meantime, the national economy was already shrinking, and the poorest group felt the most from the effects of this disease, many families and individuals lost their humble sources of income, and hunger consumed the people.

Tokolosha, the head of the nation did not know what else to do. He was talking to Rafael, the Prime Minister. “The people are dying from this plague. It will not be long before hunger also begins to cause deaths.”

“It is Your Excellency. The collapse of our economy is imminent. In a few days, we will be facing a crisis never seen in the country.” The two regretted being in the presidential palace, and wondered what the nation’s salvation would be.

It was a Sunday evening, when Mavuue and Ngoko, seated around the fireplace, were listening to the news on Xigubo's community radio. They always used Grandpa Mambonhe's, Mavuue's grandfather, old radio. The news predicted that there would be a major crisis in the country in less than a month, and that His Excellency Tokolosh, together with his entourage, could not find a reliable formula to solve the dilemma.

"The situation is very bad Ngoko; it is our lives and those of our brothers in this nation that are at stake."

"It is true my dear friend. We are left to our own luck."

"Now more than ever, we must try to implement our idea. I believe that we can save lives, and rescue our country's economy."

"Yes Mavuue, the idea is certainly promising. But how will we get to the capital or how will we even meet His Excellency Tokolosh so that he can listen to our proposal?"

After about a minute, Mavuue answered, "I have an idea! We can leave tomorrow for the capital. We will walk. If we are lucky we will hitch a ride... otherwise, we will walk!"

"What? That is out of the question. You need to review your thinking!"

"Ngoko, there are many lives at stake. We have to take a risk; we will succeed with God's help."

Mavuue and Ngoko discussed their plan for long until they agreed on what to do. They had to flee to the capital the next day, without the knowledge of their families, as they would not allow such a plan. That night, Ngoko slept at his friend's house.

The next day, the boys left before anyone woke up. By the time Grandpa Mambonhe woke up, the boys were nowhere to be found. He immediately told Ngoko's family and a search party was formed. But it was too late, the search party returned home with no sign

of Mavuve or Ngoko. Their families were worried but prayed that they were safe.

Meanwhile, the two friends were making progress. They had hitched some rides which significantly reduced their walking distance and travel time. They each had a folder that contained 5 litres of water, two xima bowls and the papers with the sketch of the 'Real Change'. After four days of travelling, Mavuve and Ngoko arrived in the capital, the 'land of the largest bridge in Africa'. The presidential palace was right in front of them.

"Ufff...finally we are here! Thank God" Ngoko said. He was so exhausted he could barely speak.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah... huuff... ultimately!" Mavuve replied after a while.

The two dragged themselves towards the palace. When they arrived at the palace, two security guards stationed at the gate trained their weapons on them. They just fainted. Concerned, the security guards immediately called the presidential nurse. After about 30 minutes, the boys felt stronger and spoke their intention.

"We are from Xigubo. We want to see His Excellency Tokolosha."

"Please help us to get an audience with him. We have walked for about 221 km to get here. Our effort cannot be in vain! We have a solution to the crisis that the country is going through."

After hearing their proposal, the nurse agreed to help them.

"Good morning, Your Excellencies," the boys greeted the President and the Prime Minister. They tried to be brave although it was very clear that they were nervous.

"Sit down, and feel comfortable," replied the Prime Minister.

"So... boys, I heard that you come from Xigubo. What really brings you here?" asked the President.

The boys quickly recovered from their nervousness and produced their sketches of the 'Real Change' inscribed in an old notebook. They gave the sketches to the President and the Prime Minister and began to explain their plan.

"Yes, Mr. President, we are from Xigubo. The documents you have are the representation of a national health and economic restoration program, designed by Ngoko and myself. We called the program 'Real Change' because it will bring real and lasting changes."

"The program is based on three main pillars: Social Justice, Public Health and Food Security. The primary objective of the program is to eradicate this disease, preserve public health and rescue the national economy, by promoting the spirit of gifts and sharing, favouring support for the most vulnerable people."

The President and the Prime Minister were increasingly being impressed by what they saw and heard. The relief and the feeling of having found salvation were already beginning to be felt!

Without wasting time, Mavuve continued with his explanation.

"In the first pillar of Social Justice, the country needs to focus on promoting national solidarity! First of all, the people need to be very united, not a union based on mere speeches, but based on real equality of rights, mutual responsibility and sharing of resources.

"The richest need to know how to use the resources they have for the benefit of the most disadvantaged, while they share the social values they have. All citizens must feel welcomed, in a just and supportive society."

He took a break as Ngoko talked about the other two pillars.

Ngoko said, "In the second pillar of Public Health, the program will work to combat this disease. Families will be provided with sanitation and protection material against the disease while they

remain in their homes. In parallel, a scientific committee will be created to find a cure for this disease.

“In the third and last pillar, Food Security, we must guarantee access to basic food to all families. The reality is clear; in order to overcome this outbreak, families need to remain isolated in their homes as much as possible. In order to do this, all low-income families who work in markets, fairs and other places of greater risk, should remain at home!”

After 45 minutes of explaining about the ‘Real Change’, the President and the Prime Minister were impressed and they wanted to start its implementation immediately.

Thus, the President spoke in a soft and humble tone, “This is really a brilliant program. I invite you to stay here at the palace for the next few days so that we can carry out this plan and rescue our country from this precipice.”

“It will be our pleasure, Your Excellency. We accept your invitation.” The days that followed were full of hard work, in the implementation and execution of the ‘Real Change’. Mavuue and Ngoko gathered and trained young volunteers for the cause. They worked day and night to monitor all processes, investing all their energies in the cause. After periods of resistance, the Corona bug began to give in to the activities of ‘Real Change’.

Meanwhile their families at home had heard about what their children were doing through the radio. They were so proud of them. The results of the ‘Real Change’ were of immeasurable importance. Finally, the dictatorship of the Corona bug was overthrown, having been forced to abandon that nation. In less than two months, the contamination level dropped to less than five cases a day, as families did not need to break the isolation by looking for ‘bread’, instead the bread went to their tables every day thanks to the spirit of sharing that inhabited the hearts of the people. It

did not last long and the scientific research committee got a cure for the disease, thanks to the magnificent efficiency techniques introduced by Mavuve and Ngoko.

The spread of the disease stopped, and the economy grew exponentially every month, as the program provided for the nationalisation of some private economies, assistance to small producers, and the creation of sources of income for all disadvantaged families, through administration training in entrepreneurship and small business management. Everything had returned to normal and emerged for the best.

Mrs. Adelaide, a resident of Xigubo village tells how ‘Real Change’ saved her family from illness, rescued her from absolute poverty, and boosted the economy in her neighbourhood, when interviewed. “I don’t even know what to say ... this program is the best thing that could have happened for the country in general, and for me in particular. Thanks to the ‘Real Change’, my life was saved, because I no longer needed to put it at risk in search of sustenance. After training in entrepreneurship, and with the financing given, I created my own business, I am the largest producer of vegetables in the village. My family now lives in safe and dignified conditions, and I am an employer of more than 50 young people. The program taught us to value solidarity. Today, we know that only together can we overcome any threat to our lives. Part of what I earn from my business, I use in community initiatives to fight hunger and chronic malnutrition and emancipation of women.”

That year was proclaimed as the ‘Year of Solidarity’ and Mavuve and Ngoko were declared ‘Little National Heroes’. Other countries, seeing what would have happened to that nation, started to request the ‘Real Change’ to implement it.

Mavuue and Ngoko had a brilliant career. They became advisers to the presidency.

The courage and cunning of the two young men from Xigubo revolutionised the paradigms of life in that nation, opening a path of hope and prosperity for thousands of people – from chaos came salvation.

“... The people of this country, from the experience they have lived, can testify to everyone that a better world is only possible when everyone unites and takes responsibility for each other. Solidarity is a window of hope for everyone! Let the fears and uncertainties that deprive the youth layer to show its brilliance and better serve the community cease,” Mavuue addressed the people.