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Harambee 2006 presentation in Rome

"All together for Africa" is the motto of "Harambee," a solidarity project begun in 2002 to commemorate the canonization of the founder of Opus Dei. On February 13, Harambee announced four new African development initiatives.

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Harambee also announced at its press conference in Rome that later this year it will be awarding the second edition of its “Communicating Africa” prize, for television reports that show African development issues in a realistic and positive way.

Harambee 2002 was begun at the canonization of St. Josemaría Escrivá, with the aim of channeling gratitude for the canonization into concrete social outreach to those in need. Since then Harambee has financed 24 African-run projects in 14 African countries.

“All the projects are promoted by local African organizations,” said Linda Corbi, international organizer of the campaign. “Africa will resolve its problems thanks to the Africans. They are already working for the development of the continent, and the only thing they need is a hand to help out.”

Four new projects

At the press conference Harambee announced the beginning of an international fundraising campaign for the following four projects:

1) Sudan: a professional training program for women and youths from South Sudan who have fled the civil war afflicting the country.

2) Kenya: a training program for primary and secondary school faculty.

3) Madagascar: professional training for artisans and their families.

4) Congo: a health service program for women and children in the rural outskirts of Kinshasa.

“The 2006 campaign aims to foster hope in Africans,” said Carlo De Marchi, a Harambee coordinator. “We know that these four projects

are only four drops of water in the desert. Nevertheless they are important because they encourage those already working for African development and they are achieving good results.”

The four new projects also aim to offer people a way to respond to Pope Benedict XVI’s call to charity in his recent encyclical “Deus Caritas Est.”

African representatives

Also participating in the press conference were two representatives of projects in Congo and Sudan that will be receiving funds from Harambee 2006.

Patiance Mongo, a nurse in the Monkole Hospital (Kinshasa, Congo) spoke about the efforts they are currently making to offer health care to women and children on the outskirts of the capital. Nearly

500,000 people live in these poor districts, so there is a lot of work to be done. “Mothers are central to the social development of Congo,” she said. “They are the primary ones educating the children, and only with their help will the continent be reborn.”

Sister Liliana Ugolino, a Canosian nun, recounted her experiences in Sudan, where she works on programs for the social and professional development of women. “Over the years,” she said, “I have learned that what helps African women is not so much the education we provide but the encouragement and help we can give them to develop the potential they have within themselves.”

Communicating Africa

The mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, sent a letter to the Harambee organizers, in which he wrote:

“‘Communicating Africa’ is necessary to raise awareness, not hiding Africa’s tragedies, but at the same time praising its richness, which is the patrimony of humanity.”

The philosophy behind Harambee’s “Communicating Africa” prize is that documentary makers “should not hide the problems, but show how Africans are working themselves to resolve them,” said Diego Contreras, prize coordinator.

Harambee is an initiative of ICU, a NGO with headquarters in Rome, which has promoted development projects around the world since 1966.