**CHLOE’S CHRONICLES CONTINUED (XMAS 2014)**

**A CHILD’S EYEVIEW**

It was Christmas Vacation time and, as everyone knows, the tradition or practice is to organize a reunion in a location they prefer, or simply join Mami & Papi. However, for us, this Christmas we didn’t have to make a choice! We were all heading to Cameroon to see and spend time with Chloe.

20th December 2014, 17:10 : The Air France Boeing touched down at l’Aéroport International de Douala… It was hot, the police checks seemed ever so slow; The luggage seemed to take forever to arrive; I became a little agitated, but I knew why– I was eager to hold my baby girl again.

She was at the airport, waiting, not complaining of the heat or the chaos just waiting for that big family hug – it finally came! It was a big and a long one spiced with kisses and tender cheek pinches. She seems to have grown horizontally and vertically – I quickly checked by memory, trying to recall if Saker food was that good to have provoked such growth, especially for a child who considered the Saker cuisine somewhat wanting… This was a minor distraction though; We were together again and Chloe looked well and happy, and that’s all that mattered.

Across the vacation, little unprompted stories were told, highlighting Chloes’ first term experience at Saker and its associated boarding life. They could be about a dozen of them but for this issue, I will focus on three, taking the liberty to give them titles, some of which the story teller might not like from her child’s eye view, but this is how it goes…

**FOREIGN NAMES:**

My first weeks at Saker were hell, as senior students stopped me on my way up the hill to ask one thing or another about my names – How do they pronounce your names? What kind of a name is McGough? What tribe does your name come from? On and on. For the most part I tried to answer in a friendly manner - Mc like in McDonalds and Gough like coughing only with a G. You know like Gough Whitlam? Not wanting my name to be pronounced wrongly, I made the effort to explain. After a while I was fed up mainly because I had to repeat myself over and over each day but also because I was amongst the last to reach my class every time. So at some point, I answered just call me Bessem that will do – to which I got – “Stand here! This form child is rude eh! When I talk to you, you look at me right in my eyes? Eh? this child is bold… after 2-3 weeks, things around my names settled. Many call me Bessem; it is easier; others Chloe or McGough – thank goodness my mum gave me names that suit every continent.

**CORNCHAFF:**

**Chloe**: Mum! They presented us with corn and beans stew the very next day after you dropped me at school… you know the thing you eat which I dare not taste?

Mum: Yes, Cornchaff

**Chloe:** Ah yes, that’s the name. I always forget that name.

**Mum:** But I told you to taste a little so you can get used to it and you said you will cross that bridge when you get there.

**Chloe:** Well, the first day we were served Cornchaff, I folded my arms and stared at my plate. The Refectory Prefect came and asked me – “Why are you not eating?” I pondered a little, wondering whether she wanted the long or the short version, and then gave her the short version – “ I have never been able to understand the concept of mixing corn and beans, when corn is supposed to be an entrée (you know like in salads and stuff) and beans a main dish”.

**Mum:** Wow, Chloe, that’s a mouth full for a short version. What did the Prefect say?

**Chloe:** She looked at me angrily - at least I thought so at the time and said –“YOU DON’T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND ANY CONCEPTS HERE, JUST EAT IT!” She has a strong accent like people from Liverpool.

**“JARGON”:**

**Chloe:** Mum do you know what Saker girls call an **ANNEX**? , Yes of course, the toilets… hmmmm I really wonder why they have to add another name for toilets as if toilet is not already spoiled for choice – WC, restroom, toilets, powder room, little corner….the first time I heard the reference “annex”, I wondered what it was so I made a note in my small note book and later checked in the dictionary – and it said something along the lines of an attachment to a document, something, an appendix or so…

**Mum:** Chloe do not trouble yourself looking in the dictionary for some of the words used in Saker.

**Chloe:** Yes mum. I figured that one pretty quickly, when the girl sleeping on top of my bunk bed was referred to as my **BUNCKGOH** and the girl sitting on my left in class was referred to as my **SIDECHOS** and the popular break snack is called **ZEGE-ZEGE** (plantain chips, sliced boiled eggs and pepper)

**Mum:** Hmmm, we didn’t have those in our time, but I am sure there is definitely room in the Saker dictionary for those.

In order not to make for a very long read, I will end here! But if I were to continue, the other titles could be:

Cornflakes: the name to represent all types of cereal;

Problematic foreign accent;

English sarcasm no one gets;

Tuesday Spaghetti – Chloe’s father is the delivery man…

Overall, from a parent’s point of view I saw lots of positives but the one that I think I should mention to other ExSSA mums is the very close friendship that has developed between Chloe and I. Now that we have many things in common, she is more open, our conversations are not boring, we sing over house chores, we have our own Saker expressions and use our Saker diction to the furthest extent possible. I love the bonding, I enjoy the close friendship, but it’s not all positive though. The “down side”, if you want to call it that, is that her accent is changing, and her expressions are changing too. In fact the very first evening over dinner, I was eating my Fufu and Eru with a fork and she immediately said –“ Hmm, Mummy, you are making ***Ajebo***” to which I responded with a smile “I am sure this same statement has been used on you several million times” – she smiled and nodded. In a nutshell, Chloe is settling well, enjoying Saker and the activities she considers extracurricular – Christmas play, Inter-house, and now, the upcoming 11th February Marching and the Kontri dances. Dis story na ye I go like for tell next…

I thank you all for your prayers and best wishes.