

# Solidarity with Southern Sudan Newsletter



Dr. Maria Martinelli, a Comboni Sister working with SSS attends to the needs of residents in Wau, Southern Sudan.

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Dear Friend,

In this issue we would like you to meet Sister Maria Martinelli who coordinates SSS's health care initiative and to provide you with more information regarding the impressive Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI) located in Wau, Western Bahr el-Ghazal state of Southern Sudan. I hope you enjoy this issue.

Sr. Martha Westwater, SC Editor



Dr. Martinelli with some of her students at the CHTI in Wau, Southern Sudan

## Meet the Director of CHTI

By worldly standards, being the Director of SSS's Catholic Health Training Institute in Wau is a guarantee of challenging work in an obscure location. But for Sister Maria Martinelli, this is the perfect place to develop a training institute for nurses: the need for competent health care in Southern Sudan is among the greatest in the world.

Born in Trento, Italy, Sister Maria is a member of the Comboni Missionary Congregation. When SSS made plans to focus on the health issues of Southern Sudan, Sister Maria stepped forward to help organize and implement a much needed training program for nurses. Her credentials as a surgeon/doctor are both expansive and expressive of her qualifications to be Director of the Health Training Institute in Wau, South Sudan.

Sister Maria received her degree in Medicine and Surgery from Pavia University, Italy, in 1983. She also holds numerous diplomas and certificates including, but not limited to tropical medicine and hygiene, Liverpool, U.K. (1988); tropical dermatology, ALERT, (1991): leadership in emergency situations, London, U.K. (1997); and managing HIV/AIDS in low-income countries, Brescia, Italy (2005) and Parma, Italy (1997). In addition, she has had advanced preparation for training nurses and young doctors with sensitivity to the professional context of Africa.

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Students attend class in a completely refurbished and renovated medical teaching facility.

## Establishing the Health Training Institute

Built in the mid-1980s by the German NGO Misereor, Wau's Health Training Institute had prepared young men and women to enter the health profession only four years before Sudan's civil war encroached on the city. Concern for the safety of the students resulted in the students being sent home and the campus closed. Years later, when the CPA was enacted and it was safe to return, the residents of Wau found their town in ruins and dwellings burnt to the ground. Out of desperation, many of these internally displaced persons squatted in campus buildings.

The initial challenge in restoring the campus was to secure legal ownership of the property, help the squatters move to individual quarters, and begin renovating all buildings on campus. This process took about two years of hard work on many people's part and the staff of the CHTI are to be commended for their patience and diligence in renovating the instructional facility to excellent standards. The campus now boasts wonderful facilities: student dormitories, cafeteria, classrooms, library, computer center, science laboratory, administrative offices, faculty housing, laundry areas, social spaces and its own electrical and water supply.



Laboratory studies and clinical rotations are important instructional moments for nursing students.

## A Challenging Curriculum

Graduates of the CHTI will receive a Registered Nursing certificate from this internationally certified, Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) approved program. The demanding curriculum to obtain this credential requires three and a half years of successful study including clinical rotations. Because English is the language of instruction (and typically the students' second or third language) approximately six months of training in English must precede their regular medical classwork.

In addition to their regular nurse education, special emphasis will be placed on midwifery training. The nursing/midwifery issue is complicated by the non-uniform distribution of health workers in the country. More than two thirds are working in 3 of the 10 states, and there is a severe urban-rural bias. As a consequence, Southern Sudan has the highest maternal mortality ratio in the world standing at a staggering figure of 2054 maternal deaths/100,000 live births.

CHTI's high-quality medical training program is oriented towards very well qualified individuals. Students are solicited who have demonstrated significant academic prowess and who show promise for success in the rigorous program. Because the student annual tuition fee of \$6,000 greatly exceeds the average income of typical Southern Sudanese, all scholarships must be underwritten. Students accepting these scholarships agree to work in their local communities for at least two years upon graduation. This agreement helps to provide rural populations with much needed health care. Scholarships for students are generously provided by friends and agencies which help to sponsor this medical work of *Solidarity with Southern Sudan*.

## Special Feature:

**Interview with Sr. Marita Martinelli (click on image)**



Sr. Maria Martinelli discusses  
the CHTI

## In This Issue

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## Quotable Quotes

*"Of the  
4600 health workers  
who are presently working  
in Southern Sudan, less than 10-20%  
have received more than nine months  
of any form of professional training."*

Southern Sudan Medical Journal, August 2010

## Support



*Solidarity with Southern Sudan* depends entirely on contributions from individuals and agencies to provide its many activities which build human capacity post-conflict country.

In support of the SSS program, donations of any amount can be sent to:

La Salle International Foundation  
Hecker Center - Suite 334  
3025 Fourth Street, NE  
Washington DC 20017-1102  
+1 (202) 526-6095

or through our website:  
[www.lasalleinternational.org](http://www.lasalleinternational.org)

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**SSS Staff  
Currently Serving  
At the CHTI**

Mary Stella Arulsamy SSpS

Esperance Bamiriyo CMS

Sneha Joseph SSpS

Maria Martinelli CMS

Alphonsa Thomas DHM

Mary Anne Williamson FMM

**Upcoming Events**

May 16, 2011      SSS Governing Board (Rome, Italy)  
May 17, 2011      SSS Fund Raising Committee (Rome, Italy)  
July 9, 2011        The Republic of Southern Sudan officially becomes Africa's 54th country.

**With Appreciation**

Thank you for assisting us to empower Southern Sudan with teachers and health care workers who are compassionate, talented, and capable. With your help, we are making great strides.

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