



Solidarity with South Sudan

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White Paper on Solidarity with South Sudan

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“Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, near and far, rather it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.” (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis)

Preface

Solidarity with South Sudan (Solidarity) is an act of solidarity between religious congregations of women and men who are members of the Union of Superiors General (USG), the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) and the Church in South Sudan under the direction of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference (SCBC). This initiative, centering on health, education, pastoral care and agricultural training reflects a new model or paradigm for religious congregations to collaborate with one another in order to respond more effectively to the immense and urgent needs in South Sudan.

History

After 21 years of civil war, a fragile Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) from 2005-2011 promised a referendum on future unity, or separation, of the South and the North of the country. The referendum held on January 9th 2011, after an extensive prayer and civic education campaign, resulted in an overwhelming vote for separation. Independence was granted on July 9th 2011 and the celebrations were joyful. All were thankful that the long years of war were finally at an end.

The next two years have witnessed significant progress in building the new country called South Sudan and some steps towards creating unity among the different tribes and clans of South Sudan. Fundamental infrastructure and basic human services began to be developed in South Sudan. There was a real need for Government and Church leaders to be encouraged and supported, diocesan and parish leaders to be reenergized, and basic physical structures to be built in order to deliver the 5 R's of the CPA: reconciliation, rehabilitation, repatriation, reconstruction, and re-education.

It is estimated that 85% of the population had been displaced during the war years, leading to severe disruption of social structures for health and education. With an estimated illiteracy rate of eighty-two per cent, South Sudan ranks as the most illiterate country in the world. Less than 20% of its teachers have had any kind of training. The new Government asserted there was an unmet educational need for 26,000 new Primary school teachers in South Sudan, and for in-service training of the current teachers.

The urgent need for trained health personnel is just as obvious. In some parts of the country, it is a sad fact that almost one out of every five children dies before the age of 5. In contrast this with, Italy where the rate is only one in 250. Rates of maternal death at childbirth are among the highest in the world. In an effort to address such critical needs in education and health, the combined efforts of Roman Catholic religious congregations are being offered collaboratively through Solidarity with South Sudan. Qualified teachers and health care professionals who are members of Solidarity are helping to put a fractured new country on the road to recovery and stabilization.

Unfortunately, recent political and ethnic rivalries gave rise to an outbreak of violence in Juba on December 15th 2013. The initial clashes among the Presidential guard quickly spread through fear, rumour and responses in tribal retribution across Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity States. It is now estimated that more than 800,000 South Sudanese have been displaced during this time and more than 20,000 have been killed. The next national elections for South Sudan are planned for 2015, but we hope for a democratic resolution of the conflict and a lasting peace long before then. Solidarity's work has come to a temporary halt in Malakal in Upper Nile State but has continued in Juba, Wau, Yambio, Riimenze, Rumbek, Agok, and other locations visited by the pastoral team. There is a determination and continuing commitment of all Solidarity members to assist the suffering people of South Sudan.

After the fighting in Malakal made teacher training impossible, the staff of the Solidarity Teacher Training Institute, were re-located to Rumbek to deliver teacher training programmes to students in Years One, Two and Three of the in-service programme. Solidarity plans, nonetheless to return to Malakal as soon as the security situation permits.

In both Yambio and Wau, a very high percentage of student teachers and nurse and midwife trainees have returned following the Christmas break. The determination of the young South Sudanese to continue to progress and build a new South Sudan whatever the adversity is both admirable and remarkable.

Inter-congregational Communities

Solidarity with South Sudan originated in response to a request from the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference (SCBC) to help them to address critical educational, health and pastoral needs in South Sudan. This project addresses these vital needs by creatively merging the talents, abilities, energies and charisms of over 200 religious congregations to work collaboratively in this innovative project. Sisters, Brothers, Priests and some laity are endeavouring to collaborate harmoniously in the best interests of helping the people of South Sudan forge a more optimistic future.

Current Status of the Project

A Board of Governors, made up of congregational Superiors General or their Councillors, sets the policy framework for Solidarity with South Sudan and ensures good governance and close financial oversight of the whole organisation. Some of the responsibility has already been partially delegated to a Board in South Sudan specifically set up to direct the operations of the Catholic Health Training Institute in Wau. The Solidarity initiative was originally led from Rome by an Executive Director appointed by the Solidarity Board with a Project Director coordinating the work of the members in South Sudan. The Executive Director position has now been moved from Rome to South Sudan and an Associate Executive Director appointed in Rome to generate support from outside South Sudan, managing organisational structures and liaison with the contributing congregations. A central office has been established in the South Sudan capital of Juba which serves as an important coordinating office for the project and offers the opportunity to collaborate with other Faith Based Organisations and NGOs in serving the people of South Sudan. The Sudan Management Team works collaboratively with the Executive Director in South Sudan planning and decision-making.

Five communities (Malakal, Riimenze, Wau, Yambio and Juba) have been established where 31 religious from 20 different congregations and 14 different nationalities plan and work in the teacher training program, the health care training institute and organize local and pastoral activities. Agricultural projects are being developed in Riimenze and Wau focusing on good practices in community farming and in developing sustainable support of the health

and teacher training colleges. The education and health programs are being developed in coordination with the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (RoSS) but, for funding, rely heavily on the continued support of some very committed partner organisations, the support of the member congregations and other donors.

Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI)

The original Health Training Institute in Wau, Western Bahr el Ghazal, was built and funded by Misereor. It operated for four years training a variety of medical personnel before military activity in the local area in the late 1980s necessitated the closure of the facility and the relocation of students to safer areas. After the war, residents moved back into the Wau area and a large number of internally displaced people (IDPs) became resident in the various buildings of the CHTI campus. During this time, desks, doors and books were burned to provide cooking fires for the squatters.

The property is owned by the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference (SCBC) who asked Solidarity to renovate the buildings and to develop a health training institute for the training of health professionals. Solidarity successfully sought out generous donors to pay the very substantial costs involved in restoration work and the creation of the new Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI).

The first program offered at the CHTI was a Registered Nursing curriculum, and this was significant in that it was the first RN certified program in the history of the country. The program requires three years of academic training and clinical placement. In addition to the SRN program, the first cohort of midwifery students began the state certified program in January 2012. These programs have been instituted at the request of the Republic of South Sudan (RoSS), Ministry of Health, to help alleviate the critical need for these services in South Sudan.

Although outside of the Solidarity project, the CHTI works closely with the St. Daniel Comboni, Catholic Diocesan hospital in Wau. This facility, which is also Church property, was used by the military during the two civil wars and in 2010 was returned to the Catholic Church. The entire facility has been reconstructed and includes an outpatients department, several wards, a surgical theatre, an area for obstetrics and gynaecology, a midwifery unit, as well as general admissions areas, paediatric unit and a pharmacy. Under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the St Daniel Comboni Catholic hospital and the CHTI, our nursing students are currently receiving appropriate clinical rotations and high quality instruction, in an excellent facility.

There are 94 students in residence in the CHTI in 2014 of whom 40 are women, a very significant number considering how few women have had the opportunity to attend secondary school in South Sudan. There are three classes of registered nurse trainees and two classes of midwives at various stages of progression through the three-year programmes. Two nursing classes graduated in 2013 with very high standard results – 7 out of the top 10 graduating results in the country were from the CHTI.

Solidarity Teacher Training Colleges (STTC)

South Sudan has enormous educational needs. In strategizing how best to assist South Sudan's educational needs, it was decided that one or two central, residential Teacher Training Colleges, with distance education outreach to more remote locations would be the most effective way to help the country move forward. An earlier dream that each of the seven dioceses would have a teacher training college is simply beyond the limited resources of staff and finance available. The challenges of securing sufficient staff and constructing

appropriate facilities has led Solidarity to focus on developing two campuses of the STTC - in Malakal and Yambio.

These also act as the bases from which Solidarity tutors move out to deliver programs in other dioceses.

STTC offers both part-time in-service programmes to improve the skills and qualifications of current teachers and full-time pre-service teacher training that brings new teachers into the basic (primary) school education system.

The four-year in-service programme has been delivered, or is still being delivered at a wide variety of locations including Rumbek, Agok, Leer and Nzara as well as bringing teachers in for residential in-service training in Yambio and Malakal from locations distant from our College, such as Tali, Old Fangak, Tombura and Ezo.

The pre-service is full-time for secondary school graduates and involves both academic instruction and teaching practice. The basic curriculum is enriched by classes in computer studies, music, art, agriculture and classes designed to give life skills.

To ensure that there is sufficient personnel to meet these outreach locations Solidarity invites religious and lay people with previous mission experience to come to South Sudan for 2-3 month periods per year to assist. One sad consequence of the December 15th outbreak of violence and the lack of security in the country was that 16 very generous volunteers were turned back as they were on the verge of coming to assist with teacher training. The locations in which we could deliver in-service were consequently reduced from six to three.

In all our programmes, Solidarity with South Sudan tries to promote affirmative action to give more opportunity to girls and women. It is encouraging to note the progress in this area in a country where polygamy is still widespread and girls are bartered in marriage for cows, often at a young age.

Agricultural Training

Agricultural programmes to help educate the local South Sudanese people on how to grow food most effectively in the varying environmental conditions is being developed in Riimenze (Western Equatoria) and more recently, in Leer. Local family members – especially women - are being helped to grow new crops, explore ways of harvesting water and processing food for sale in the local market. New, but old, techniques, such as using oxen to plough are being introduced along with various kinds of crop planting, animal husbandry and bee keeping.

Large tracts of land are also under cultivation to help produce substantial quantities of food to sustain the students studying in the CHTI and STTC.

Pastoral Work

The original founding documents of *Solidarity with South Sudan* saw the health and education centres also serving as bases for pastoral activity in a post-war Sudan. It was believed and we continue to believe, that the pastoral dimension of our work should extend to our communities, our apostolic works, and the local communities. In all our programmes there is a focus on counselling, reconciliation, peace building, trauma healing, spiritual accompaniment, and community building. The informal and occasional pastoral initiatives have now evolved into programmes coordinated across all dioceses and designed to assist all dioceses to develop their own programmes.

The Solidarity Pastoral Coordinator works closely with South Sudan National Pastoral Director, while various members of the Solidarity pastoral team work with the Diocesan coordinators. Many workshops and reconciliation programmes have been delivered in the name of Peace across South Sudan. Programmes delivered at national level for all Dioceses, include peace-building workshops. Insights from Catholic Social Teaching are used as a basis for constructing a new country.

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