Greetings!

The Newsletter from Solidarity with South Sudan (SSS) has crossed the ocean from its old home in Washington DC to its new home in Rome. In this time of transition we welcome Mr Angelo Spadavecchia, Director of Communications, and bid adieu to Brother Craig Franz whose creative intelligence and efficiency sparked the Newsletter, and to a former SSS member, Mr Peter Stemp, whose technical wizardry proved such a blessing. Both Brother Craig and Peter witness to the overwhelming gratitude Solidarity extends to the hundreds of volunteers from all countries and walks of life who give so generously of their time and talent to the people of South Sudan. The amount of progress made in health care and in education over the past five years is truly staggering. Such monumental progress could not be made without the help of our volunteers.

Sr. Martha Westwater, SC, Editor
Vatican Recognition

Among the Top Ten People recognized by Inside the Vatican in 2011, was our own Sister Patricia Murray. Her citation attests to her "helping hundreds of thousands" in South Sudan with "great energy, great courage, great administrative skill, and great love." Among Sister Patricia's accomplishments was her working with a new paradigm for consecrated life, born of compassion for the scarred and downtrodden of the earth. Members from over 200 Religious Congregations are now living out this paradigm because Sister Patricia believes that in our frailty a space is opened up for God to do something new. In this new form of consecrated life now being lived in South Sudan there is the possibility, as Sister Patricia Murray affirms, "of being evangelized by the very people to whom we announce the gospel."

Executive Director, Sr Pat meeting a local woman in the Riimenze clinic

In This Issue

Inside the Vatican Award
Empowering Women
Lenten Appeal: Will you educate me?
Insights from South Sudan
A Story of Welcome
Walk+Chalk+Talk=Hope

Support

Solidarity with South Sudan depends entirely on contributions from individuals and agencies to support its many activities which build human capacity in this post-conflict country.

In sponsoring Solidarity activities, donations of any amount may be sent through our website

www.solidarityssudan.org

Follow Solidarity on the web

For more information about Solidarity with South Sudan, visit our website:

www.solidarityssudan.org

Take a video tour of our projects on YouTube
A major challenge to Solidarity workers in South Sudan is raising the dignity of that country’s women. The new Ministry of Health’s (MoH) education standards, set by the new Republic of South Sudan (RoSS), continue to require that primary and post-primary education criteria be applied to courses such as those offered at the Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI). The MoE (Minister of Education) also mandates that such standards be maintained at the TTI (Teachers Training Institute). Solidarity is the largest provider of teacher training in the country. However, South Sudan (and SSS) continue to face a significant set of cultural challenges in delivering education to young Sudanese women.

Traditionally young Sudanese girls have not attended primary school.
Family customs have dictated that young girls stay at home, see to family needs, and in many cases, marry at a very early age. As late as 2003, for example, in the state of Rumbek (an area as large as Italy), there were just 13 girls in the secondary school system. It will take several years before a sufficient number of girls enter the education system enabling further structured education both in health care and in teacher education.

In a July 2011 Report, among its crucial findings, UNESCO calculated that fewer than half of primary school-age children are in school, and fewer than half of those get even four years of education. It is estimated that only about 8% of women in South Sudan are literate, possibly the lowest female literacy level in the world. Standing next to the bottom in the world's ranking for net enrolment in primary education (and bottom for net enrolment in secondary education), the ratio of student to qualified teachers is 100:1. Just 12% of the teachers are female. It is this gender inequality that Solidarity is trying to rectify.

Lenten Appeal

With the educational drought of the South Sudanese people so apparent, what can individuals and groups do to help? During this Lent Solidarity is launching a campaign "101 Teachers" to celebrate South Sudan's first year of Independence. It costs three thousand dollars or two thousand four hundred euros to educate one teacher. That one teacher, however, instructs eighty students! Already Solidarity has begun the work by training over 1500 teachers. More help is needed! Forty-five thousand teachers are required to train the next generation of young Sudanese children.
INSIGHTS FROM SOUTH SUDAN
Sr. Margaret Scott, RNDM
Yambio, Teacher Training

Monday, March 12, 2012 saw the beginning of the Pre-service teacher training programme here in Yambio with a first day roll of 11 students. The next day saw three more students on the roll. We are fortunate to have two women from Abyei and three more women are due from the Nuba Mountains. Two men have joined us from Marpuordit and we expect more students to arrive in the next few days.

One way we thought of introducing the "Solidarity culture" was to write slogans and place them in prominent positions around the college. Slogans such as: "Solidarity people speak English", "Solidarity people are punctual", "Solidarity people try to excel", "Solidarity people are respectful" were produced and stuck on the walls, creating a colourful display and getting a message across.

The need to speak English is so important here as there are students from different areas in South Sudan and thus different languages are spoken. So as to assist the students in improving their English, and raising awareness about other cultural groups a strong emphasis is put on the speaking of English. One student was heard exclaiming in a language other than English. When he was asked about this he said, "The words I was saying were in brackets!"

What could we say to that?

A STORY OF WELCOME AND APPRECIATION

Yambio, Teacher Training
Sr. Patricia Johannsen, SCL

This story is one that happened at Solidarity Teacher Training College on 16th March. Some of the personnel from Caritas Austria stopped by for a short visit to see the teacher training college. We took them to the classroom where the first year Pre-service group was having class. As soon as Sister Margaret introduced the Caritas group one of the men stood and said, "You are most welcome and I would like to welcome you with a song." He asked
his colleague to join in and proceeded to sing a song which he had written about education being the key. It was a lovely song and some of the group joined in clapping though they didn't know the words. Then another man stood and said he wanted also to add words of welcome. He also thanked them for all they have done to help the teacher training college. He said he is very grateful for the education he is receiving. He also said the college is in need of more resources like books. Both men did this spontaneously and in such a sincere manner it was heartwarming to see this.

Br Geoffrey Kennewell FSC - Teacher Training, Yambio

**Walk + Chalk + Talk = Hope**

Brother Bill Firman, who is the Director of Education for Solidarity, formulated this simple equation. Brother Bill coordinates the Teacher Training Program assisted by a team of dedicated religious and lay people from all over the world. Many young Sudanese students walk
man
y miles to school, over hot, dusty roads, to sit in chairs facing a
blackboard to learn English, the official language in South Sudan. (The
classroom is a major improvement over traditional methods whereby
the space under a tree served as a classroom and the bark of the tree
served as blackboard.) There are no computers, no overhead projectors,
no video cameras -- just chalk, a blackboard, and talk. But there is real
communication, laughter and hope. Solidarity with South Sudan is itself
a great sign of hope in the Church and in the world because it is, as
Brother Bill explains, a collaborative effort of many different men and
women, lay and religious, working together for the good of the people of
South Sudan.

With Appreciation

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

Please learn more about our work and donate through our website
www.solidarityssudan.org

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