



SOLIDARITY with South Sudan

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“We are the Nurses of the Future”

Meet the nursing students at the Solidarity Catholic Health Training Institute in Wau, South Sudan



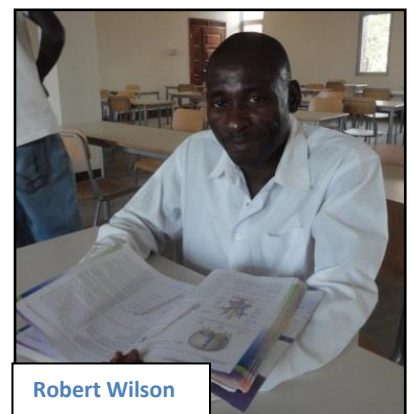
There is laughter and happy voices coming from the little group of third year nursing students sitting outside the dorm. They have just finished a written test, and they are happy with the results – just like students all over the world in a similar situation. This group of nursing students are attending the Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI) in Wau, South Sudan - in many ways similar to nursing students elsewhere , and yet so very different.

“I have been a military guy for years, fighting in the bush, how could I become a nurse?” asks Uku Ungom with a big smile. “It’s true”, adds Robert Wilson. “People asked me why I would train for such a profession”. Deng Abei nods “When we came to CHTI, we didn’t really know what a nurse was. CHTI was our only chance to get an education, so that’s why we came.”



Uku Ungom, Angu John and Deng Abei

Male nurses are something totally new in South Sudan. Initially it was difficult even for the students to understand how a man could become a nurse. “The problem was that we thought of nurses of the past who had no knowledge and few skills”, explains Wilson. “Now we know better”,



Robert Wilson



he adds with conviction. “After we have been out in our practical

training at local hospitals other people are starting to understand as well. **We are professionals with a good knowledge; we are the nurses of the future**”. “I was very happy in my last practical semester. The doctors started to share their knowledge during rounds”, says Deng, “and when they asked questions of the medical students, I

could answer as well. Sometimes even better”,



he adds with pride. **“The best feeling is though when the patients get happy. They see our green uniform, and they know that we work, they know that we will not leave them unattended”.**

Two other nursing students, Mary Kuir and Sr. Susan Kaku, join their friends. Sr. Susan used to volunteer in hospital wards during the war, when there was little staff. **“I love to work with the old, the children and the sick, and this training gives me the tools to do it very well”.**

Mary always dreamed of becoming a nurse, and she has struggled to get where she is. In her High School only 6 of 55 graduates were women. She earned a sponsorship to come to CHTI. During their practical semesters all the CHTI nursing students have met some challenges from the ‘old’ nurses. **“When we came to the hospital the nurses took advantage of us, but we took it as a chance to learn something. They took us as a chance to rest”.**

Angu John laughs, but then turns more serious. **“Then they began to think that we would take their jobs so there was a negative attitude”. Mary agrees. “But it was only because they felt shy, because they didn’t know as much as us. Now we teach them very gently, and we work together”.**

“This is what we say”, Angu John continues.

“Nurses in the past would do very basic things, give some prescribed medicines. That’s all. We, the nurses of the future, go closer to the

problems, and we try to find a solution – **often also involve the family and community. We look at the whole problem, and if it can be prevented we will give health education.”**



“Yes, nursing is a good profession and CHTI has taught me so much”, says Robert. They all agree. “The teachers and staff at CHTI are very qualified and they care about each of us. They give us everything they have, and we are learning to give our very best, too.”

Uku is sitting quietly, and then he leans forward, **“A tree is known by its fruits, and people will see that we shall change this new country of ours. I believe that the fruit of CHTI is not only for us, but for the whole country, and the whole of Africa”.**



A moment passes. Possibilities are being contemplated. Then like a bubble bursting excited voices call out goals, dreams and plans for the future – **“run a health centre”, “work with the old”, “start programmes for street children”, “focus on mothers”.** The list seems endless, like the needs of South Sudan, but there is hope, passion and commitment in the students’ voices. **It is clear that this group of CHTI nursing students are not only the nurses of the future. They are the leaders of tomorrow.**