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October 2017

A registered charity no 1117679 A registered limited company no 5969781
Registered office: 11 Foinavon Close, Rowley Regis, West Midlands B65 8QB

Dear Friends

Did you know that...

- ... in Sudan are around 200 Pyramids whereas there are around 80 left in Egypt
- ... on the border of South Sudan / Sudan are great oil resources ranking in the first quarter of countries compared worldwide (more than the UK)
- ... South Sudan and Sudan are mentioned in the Bible as the land of Cush or that Queen Candace was from Nubia
- ... most of the Nile flows through South Sudan and Sudan - the Blue Nile and White Nile merge in Khartoum



The White Nile flows through Juba, the capital of South Sudan

It has gone quieter regarding news from South Sudan as there are many other significant events that have happened recently in the world. If there are news emerging, it is about the further fragmentation of groups, also within the government, or about an infrastructure that cannot provide for the people. Due to increased insecurity and famine in some areas, there are now over a million internally displaced people and almost 3 million South Sudanese refugees living in neighbouring countries like Uganda, Kenya, Chad etc. It is beyond words to describe the impact of this on everyone affected, not only on South Sudanese themselves, but on the host countries. And most of this is due to political wrangling and power struggles. Additionally, countries like South Sudan which are rich in oil and mineral resources are often also being destabilised by global players fuelled by the consumerism we all fall prey to.

In August Archbishop Justin Welby visited some of the South Sudanese refugee camps in Uganda. Joseph and I know these camps, we used to live and work there. They had emptied over the years considerably, but sadly are now severely struggling to cope with the numbers of newcomers. Many of the refugees are not newcomers as such, but have been refugees in the past. Archbishop Justin Welby's visit has highlighted the plight of the people there, but also underlines the help Uganda has offered, despite its own struggles and limited resources. Uganda has shown remarkable openness to welcome refugees. And as always, the key issue is about finding solutions to the cause of people having to flee in the first place.

A positive headline that doesn't make it to the top of the news is how the churches in South Sudan are united in working hard to make the factions and government hear the call for justice and continue to push for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Church communities have been pulling together across tribal boundaries and political affiliation.



This strong flame of hope hasn't been quenched by the on-going struggles.

This has also been the case in the church community based in Malek, the church which is part of our school. We are incredibly thankful that so far we have been safe from any attacks, but the hardship caused by the devalued currency leading to ever rising food and living costs has been taking its toll. At the moment we are grateful that some harvest in our area is being taken in. The government has not been paying teachers for the last 6 months. We are able to pay our teachers a monthly supplement. We continue with the same teachers' team, including several women. It is so important for our girls to see women as professionals and to see to what they can aspire to.

We continue to provide schooling for over 400 girls, nursery to the end of primary school, P8.

And it's wonderful to be able to provide for our 35 girls bursaries in secondary schools in the area.

Many NGOs have left South Sudan, especially those who had operated "deeper" in the country. They don't want to be far from the borders in case staff has to evacuate. So it's even more crucial that we can maintain what we do, we are far away from the East African borders, up in the north-western area of Bahr-el-Gazal.

As term will draw to a close near to Christmas, we always provide a special Christmas meal for the school community. If you wanted to support something more specific than our running costs, this would be a great help or support the on-going increased food costs. We continue to provide a daily hearty lunch for our school community, this is a huge help to the families who know their girls receive one good daily meal. Also, this way the girls are able to concentrate in their learning and have energy to walk to school, often over several miles one way.

You could help us by adding one click to your online shopping! Register at Easyfundraising and order your items via their website, it's secure, doesn't cost you anything and our school community benefits:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/undertreeschools/>



On our support webpage are other ways to support us including the ordering of our gift certificates, a Christmas gift that will help provide education for our girls:

<http://www.undertreeschools.org/support-us.html>

Thank you so much for being on the team with our girls, they work so hard not "to drop the ball" in all the difficulties.

We value your prayers and your support, your help provides them with more than a stepping stone.

All God's blessings

Joseph und Karin Ayok-Loewenberg

