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Dear Friends



We wish you a very Happy Christmas and our very best wishes for the New Year!  
The children and staff in Malek will be celebrating Christmas together and will be enjoying an extra special meal. For the school to be able to buy a generous helping of meat, rice, okra and corn we are very grateful for the fundraising of Symondsburry School in Dorset towards this memorable Christmas meal.  
Thank you!

We also have the stable, although probably a different design. And ok, no donkey, but 13 cows!  
We want the children to learn looking after the cows, so that's their duty together with an animal keeper. These skills are important, especially in a culture where cows are a life line. People don't have insurance policies, pensions, national insurance, benefits etc. So having cattle is the insurance policy.



Apart from animal husbandry skills the children continue to have their sewing classes and computer course, and learn to mend bikes. And of course their regular school lessons. They just sat their exams, and most of them did well. If a child doesn't pass the end of year exams, they have to retake the year.

Karin and our two daughters have still some red African dust on their shoes... they have visited Joseph in Juba in October. It was great meeting up with old friends and relatives. As a belated birthday treat we spent a day on the Nile and on an island in the middle of the Nile near Juba. Back to shore in moonlight!

Juba had a calm feel, but in the back of people's mind is the question whether this month may see a repeat of the uprising that happened last December. Negotiations between different political groups continue, and some areas have experienced unrest. This political instability has devastating effects, thousands of people have not been able to return to their home areas to cultivate the fields, so food shortages are very serious in some areas. Also living costs are phenomenal, they are higher in



comparison with the UK. A banana grown in Juba is sold in the market for 25 pence. A whole bunch of bananas sells in the UK for around £ 1 having travelled across Africa and Europe.

Some oil fields continue to produce oil, but not all as they are in a politically insecure area. There is a fuel shortage which affects trade and people's movements. All of this contributes to the stagnation of building up the infrastructure of the country.

For more indepth political updates, Sudan Tribune is a good source of information as it reports on both South Sudan and Sudan which gives a more joined up picture: <http://www.sudantribune.com>

Joseph has become Director of Human Resources and Administration in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He enjoys looking after personnel based in Juba and also in embassies. He continues to be part of a strategic group helping in negotiations between different groups within the political arena. Some of his articles can be read here: <http://www.undertreeschools.org/news.html>

We are grateful for our Head Master Elias Bak and his team, they have been steering the school on an even keel despite many challenges. The cost increase in our school supplies means that our budgets has to stretch further. We have been very grateful that our school has not been affected by political unrest.

It has been wonderful to see the continuation of our 8 girls in their first year of secondary school. Thanks to Sue Davies and her group in Southwest London who have been specifically fundraising for these generous bursaries, we have been able to send some of our girls to local secondary schools. This will provide them with the skills which will open doors towards training for careers, a real alternative to early marriage. The bursaries pay the fees and expenses of attending secondary schools in the area. We hope very much that early next year we can offer to the next group of girls the opportunity of continuing their education as they will have completed their primary education.

Next fundraising event in Barnes, London on the 17th December, Gyles Brandreth's „The Happy HAPPY CHRISTMAS Show“. More details here: <http://www.undertreeschools.org/events.html>

As always we are extremely grateful for your donations. We have signed up with Btmydonate to make online giving easier: <https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/undertreeschool>

We continue to sell our gift certificates, for example £ 10 pays for a week's supplement of one teacher's salary or £ 10 gives a week's salary for one of our cooks. £ 20 pays for a week's supply of teaching materials and £ 30 for a week's food for the children. The certificates have a photo of our children, and leave space for you to write your message. They are signed by one of our trustees.

You can see a sample on our website and ordered them with this form:

<http://www.undertreeschools.org/single-donation--gift-certificates.html>

We also have photo cards, 5 cards cost £ 3 incl. p & p, contact Karin.

Without all your support and prayers our school wouldn't be where it is. Small but steady steps have enabled the community in Malek to build the school and church and we are looking forward to the next steps in 2015.

With our very warm wishes

*Karin and Joseph Ayok-Loewenberg*

PS: Can you let us know if your address has changed or if you are able to receive our newsletter by email instead of a paper copy please?

Please note our new address in the letterhead, in Spring we moved back to Dorset