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Dear Friends

We write to wish you a very happy and blessed Christmas!

We would like to let you know what is going on in South Sudan, our school in Malek and with us.

The situation in **South Sudan**, and with its neighbours, continues to pile pressures on the new Government; and so Joseph has been working continuously in his new post in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs mostly being based in Juba. His work has taken him also to other countries being involved in various negotiations. We hope that once the agreement for restarting the oil flowing again is completed, the Government will begin to see some revenue entering its coffers; at present there are serious problems in the country, including a lack of basic medical care and an inability to take forward important development projects. The country needs this revenue to start investing and building an economy that is less reliant on its oil revenue.

Sadly, the areas of the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile and Darfur (in Sudan) continue being attacked and bombed. We don't seem to hear that much in the news any longer as usually no journalists are able to enter those areas. It's incredible that recently Daniel Bogado and Adrian Hartley managed to report on these places and were awarded the Rory Peck Award for outstanding journalism. Here is a link: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20551724>.

Also, here is another report "Why some new countries are more equal than others" which sheds light on all kinds of issues of forming a new country: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/02/us-south-sudan-countries-idUSBRE8B102020121202>

And this gives an understanding of the bigger picture of the recent history of South Sudan and Sudan: "In 2006 freelance photographer Tim McKulka took a job with the U.N. Mission in Sudan based in the southern capital of Juba. 'At the time, I had only read about Sudan from a distance, and knew some vague things about it,' he says. Once there, McKulka discovered that his U.N. affiliation gave him a unique freedom of movement in a country whose government is often chary about foreign journalists. After a few years he had amassed a formidable archive of images, and started thinking about what use they might serve to Africa's largest country at a moment when it was coming apart at the seams.

The result is *We'll Make Our Homes Here: Sudan at the Referendum*, a U.N.-published book that joins McKulka's photographs with reflections on Sudanese identity from 17 Sudanese writers, spanning everything from political analysis and journalism to fiction and poetry. (The book is being published in a limited print run by the U.N. Mission in Sudan, and will soon be available in digital form as a free iPad app.) 'I had originally envisioned it as a kind of peace-building tool, to foster dialogue to let people hear other perspectives, or at least have them out there,' McKulka says.

It's more important than ever for the fractured country's residents to remember their shared history. 'Whatever happens, [the North and the South] are going to be linked: linked by culture, linked by migration, linked economically,' he says. 'It's not about promoting unity - that's an irrelevance now. It's about understanding what led to this, and what the history was.' "

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/07/07/from_khartoum_to_juba



Regarding our **school in Malek**, there are no current tensions on the border near the school. Joseph has been able to visit the school and reports that it is doing well. The academic year ends at Christmas and the girls have three months' holiday, though first they have end of year examinations to determine whether they can get promotion to the next year. This year there have been around 300 girls at the school, along with many of their little siblings in the nursery. The supply of free lunches from the World Food Programme has restarted, after a gap when supplies were short due to the tensions and high numbers of refugees.

This year the school has been able to start vocational classes in sewing, thanks to the arrival of Rebecca as sewing teacher. Computer classes for some girls have also started, taught by Angelo who has IT qualifications. Secondary education is now being offered for the oldest girls. And over 50 adults (men and women) are enrolled in adult education.

A lot of construction work has been achieved over the last year, with the finishing of the kitchen and the dining room, the strengthening of some of the earlier buildings to withstand the strong winds, and completion of the basketball courts. The chapel has also been built, and already serves 700 or more of the local people and also the school community as their church. Now the dry season has started again they can work on construction for the new farm, and we are planning the arrangements for that.



Our head teacher Bak was disappointed that ten girls left the school this year to get married. He is encouraging the girls to appreciate the huge opportunities that education can bring them. He has told the girls about Malala, the 15 year old girl from Pakistan who was shot for standing up for the right to education and for women's rights. He has celebrated with the school community her possible nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize.

We have been pleased to have received funds from generous donors for the new building projects, and we hope to have information for you soon of new school projects which have potential for creating employment in the area, and for which funds have been offered.

What we urgently need now is more funding for paying the running costs of the school (over £5,000 per month). Although most teachers get basic pay from the state, who also contribute books, we pay the wages of several teachers, including Angelo and the two who train the other teachers, and we give all the 18 teachers a monthly payment to help them afford food. We need too to pay the admin staff including the cooks. We run a truck, and the school always needs stationery and maintenance.



We are very grateful for the new standing orders that some of our supporters have started in response to our appeal in the last two newsletters. Standing orders are vital to give the school an assurance that it has a future. If you could make a monthly or quarterly standing order that would be so helpful. And if you are a church member could you appeal to others in the congregation to do the same? If you are part of a school, might parents or staff at the school be enthused to support girls' education in the newest country in the world?

Or could your Christmas present be:

£ 10 for a week's salary for one of the cooks or

£ 30 for a week's food for the children (we top up what the World Food Program supplies) or

£ 10 for a week for a teacher to supplement his state salary or how about

£ 20 for a week's supply of teaching materials?

Let Karin know and she will send you a certificate (use the single donation form:

<http://www.undertreeschools.org/make-a-single-donation.html>)

If you can Gift Aid your donation we can claim the extra 25% from the Government. You can also donate online or download our forms: <http://www.undertreeschools.org/regular-donations.html>

Also, we have signed up to Easyfundraising, an organisation which teams up with big internet companies to raise funds for charity at no cost to you. Your internet shopping will give us 2,5 % of your purchases.

All you need to do is register through this link:

<http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/find-a-cause/?q=under+tree+schools+south+sudan>

Then, every time you shop, get on this website first and go to your chosen shopping site through Easyfundraising. With Christmas coming, you could help our work in South Sudan?

A huge thank you goes to Konrad Nofer from Kidderminster who completed the full 225 miles of the Severn Way Walk raising £ 390 for Under Tree Schools this September.

And James Broderick from Kings College Wimbledon (Assistant Head of Layton House) ran the Chicago Marathon on 7 October and finished in 2 hours 50 minutes 14 seconds! He raised £ 1174.94 for Under Tree Schools. Thank you so much.



Thank you for thinking of us, and on behalf of the school community in Malek, we thank you for all your support.

God's blessings and a very happy Christmas

Joseph and Karin



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SOUTH SUDAN

