



Rev. Joseph and Mrs Karin Ayok-Loewenberg

22 Stewart Court | Kidderminster

Worc. DY10 1UR | England

Tel: 0044 (0) 1562 637 645

Mail: ayokloewenberg@fastmail.fm

Web: www.undertreeschools.org

A registered charity no 1117679 A registered limited company no 5969781

Registered office: 11 Foinavon Close, Rowley Regis, West Midlands B65 8QB

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Dear Friends

As I'm writing this letter, it feels close to temperatures in South Sudan!

And some of our friends have experienced those temperatures in April and May when visiting our school in Malek. Urs, Ruedi and Walter, supporters from Switzerland together with Peter, our administrator from England spent time with our school community. We are so grateful to our cameramen for taking lots of photos and for Ruedi putting together a great video. And for building swings! Do have a look on our website www.undertreeschools.org in the news section or check out YouTube: Under Tree Schools Joining hands and hearts 2013

This year the school is full with 358 girls from the ages of 6 through to 15, and 26 children in pre-school under the instruction of 20 teachers. The photos show the well kept compound and school life, and the girls getting and enjoying their daily lunch at the end of the morning. They are eating in our new dining hall/kitchen. We have had to appoint a fourth cook to enable us to feed so many mouths! Some of the older girls also help, including with washing the girls' hands and serving the meals.



One of the highlights of the visit was the dedication of our new chapel. It has been finished and is being well used. We are most grateful to our friends from the Swiss Association in Winterthur who have funded most of the building work. The chapel was dedicated to St. Peter in a service while our visitors were at the school. You can catch moments of the two and half hours of colourful processions, singing, dancing, and a sermon on Psalm 23 from our Swiss friend Walter in the video.

The chapel is home to a growing congregation of around 700 people from the school community and the village of Malek. During the week it is used for Bible study, a women's group and practice for singing and dancing. It is also the base for a ministry of hospitality to travellers and others who need a meal and a bed for the night. We are funding the wages of Pastor Samuel, lay reader Santo and chapel caretaker Garang, and providing expenses for their work.



UNDER TREE SCHOOLS – SOUTH SUDAN



As well as teaching the South Sudan official academic curriculum we have been able to make progress with our objective of giving the girls broader life skills. 25 girls are already learning sewing with our teacher Rebecca, and 50 are learning to operate computers with our IT teacher Angelo.

Our latest vocational initiative is creating the school farm, so that the girls can learn skills in husbandry of animals and in cropping arable land. The new barn has been built on a corner of the UTS school campus, for the herd of cattle and goats we plan to buy. We are looking for a site for the arable farm – somewhere close to the school, but fertile.

Joseph's vision has always been to give to girls what boys have had, namely the skills that give them opportunities in life. Traditionally most girls are married off at about 14 years of age. Indeed this year there is no one in the oldest year of the school. Though some are redoing the year below, having failed end of year exams, it is a bit sad that the others have left to get married. Traditions are not changed overnight.

But at the same time we are being approached by some girls who left the school last year, and who want to go to secondary school. They would need \$1000 a year for fees and they want our help. We could set up a system of bursaries to help them if our supporters wanted to commit themselves to regular payments for this purpose. What do you think?

But we also need to find the funds for the costs of running the school. Unless we can raise the £65,000 per year that it currently costs to provide the absolute basic minimum needs of the school, it will not be able to run at all. We pay the wages of several teachers (the rest are paid by the state, fortunately), we pay all the teachers a small top up payment, we pay wages to the nine non teaching staff (and the chapel staff), and we pay for some food for the teachers, a meat meal for the girls once a month, food for visitors, and costs of the truck and for maintenance of the school. We want, but cannot afford at present, to extend the solar system, or install a satellite dish to provide for better email communications with us and to tap into further teaching resources online.

our teachers





If you can organise a fundraising event for us locally, please let us know if we can send you colourful bead bracelets and necklaces to sell – we have arranged for our girls to make a supply which we hope to have in good time for Christmas Fairs and the like in our churches and schools. We also have photo cards, a pack of 5 for £ 2.50.

If you are part of a school, might parents or staff at the school be excited to support girls' education in the newest country in the world? We are revising our primary school lesson input which is accessible on our website.

As I write this letter, the second anniversary of Independence is about to be celebrated on 9th July. Despite the political ups and downs, it is so encouraging to see how many people in South Sudan want to move forward and seek change. From 1st - 7th July there are prayers with different groups (eg government, organised forces, women, youth, etc). On Friday 5th July the Muslims will take up the prayer in their mosques, and on Sunday 7th July the Christians will take it up in their churches. On Monday 8th July the national prayer will be in Juba Stadium, and prayer will also take place in each State capital. Details are announced in the media and through churches and mosques.

There is a National Day of Prayer for Reconciliation in South Sudan on Monday 8th July 2013, the eve of the anniversary of Independence.

Joseph will be home for a few weeks shortly. His work in the South Sudan Government has been keeping him very busy.



May we say how thankful the school community and we are for your continuing prayers and for your support.

The video shows you how much has been achieved in a not very easy situation!

With our warm wishes and all God's blessings

Karin and Joseph

A bit of summer reading? There is an excellent novel set in South Sudan, written by Ros Wynne-Jones. „Something is going to fall like rain”. This novel is set against the backdrop of South Sudan's battle for independence leading up to becoming the newest nation in 2011. It can be ordered on amazon.

Please let us know if your address has changed, or if you are able to receive our newsletter by email instead of a paper copy to save postage. Thank you



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