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Under Tree Schools is a Registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation No 1117679
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Dear Supporters

May 2023

The new school year began in early March with about the largest number of pupils we have ever seen: 514 girls aged 6-15 registered to come to school, and of that number virtually all have been attending classes!



Inevitably some girls fall out of school along the eight years of classes, but 19 took the year 8 end of school national examinations in February (15 in the photo) all 19 passed - and now have the chance to go on to secondary schools in the region. We know that some of those finishing secondary school are becoming teachers – some are back at our own school teaching the next generation – and others are in nursing or government and humanitarian agencies.

58 girls from our school are now at secondary school. We fund their school fees to continue their education. The total cost was about £2800 for the year. The school staff thank you for making it possible to run the school, and so to give hundreds of girls a chance to get the education that opens the door to careers.

Prices have been rising fast in South Sudan as the national economic situation remains dire. The latest news of renewed fighting in Sudan means the closure of all border crossing points to South Sudan, and the end of trade between the countries. This puts pressure on prices too, especially for areas like that of our school which are close to the border.

We have received appeals from the school staff to increase their wages so that they can continue to feed their families. In the light of the figures of food costs we have seen we felt we had to increase the base salary in South Sudanese Pounds by a factor of three, for all the 20 teaching staff and 18 admin staff. Earlier this year we had already increased the running costs payments to enable the school to continue to buy stationery, meat for the children, items for repair of the buildings etc. These increases are less expensive than they appear because one US Dollar now buys 3 times more South Sudanese Pounds than was the case three years ago.

We have been keen to ease the path for the girls to get to school. So we have been providing hygiene kits for the older girls that they do not face embarrassment over their periods. This year we are doing the same; but the price has gone up by a factor of three over last year. So we will need to send over \$5000 this year.

The school has suffered a burglary this spring: three lads stole the two school printers using some sort of master key. The lads were local: they had apparently played sports on the school pitches. The police caught them in the next state trying to sell the printers on the market; but when retrieved it turned out that the equipment was damaged and we had to replace them.

And we also need to provide for repair of the solar power system which enables the school to have electricity and light in the night hours. Electrical items do not have a long life in the climate of South Sudan, so occasionally the system goes down. We are sending \$1000 to pay for spares and the professional labour to check the system and install new kit.

We also replaced the desks and benches, so 93 desks, 200 chairs and 105 benches were assembled at the school!



We are pleased that the school is still providing education for adults, after the children go home after their lunch. Apparently about 100 adults are coming to classes at present. The fact that the lessons are based on the curriculum of the earliest school years shows that adults did not get the opportunity of school when they were young. Of course they grew up in the years of civil war as South Sudan sought to break away from the North. But women got no education at all until Independence. It is good to be able to help them even when they are adults.

International organisations try to assist education in South Sudan. Our school gets free vegetable supplies from Welthungerhilfe, so the girls get a free daily lunch. UNICEF has provided textbooks in all subjects for all the girls; the UK Government scheme Girls Education South Sudan has paid the older girls \$15 each to buy school bags and stationery; and the EU has given each teacher about \$24 to help combat inflation.

The girls enjoy sports including football, volleyball basketball and athletics. They play football in the local league. We fund uniforms and shoes for them.

We are fortunate to have reserves of funds in the charity so that we can respond to the present anxious calls for help in these times of high inflation in South Sudan. We are most grateful to all our supporters who have been generously donating to enable us to do this. It would be really useful if you could tell other people about us and encourage them to become a donor. On our website people can make an online donation through the Wonderful organisation that is free for both the donor and the charity to use. And if people would like to make a small regular contribution we have on the website a Gift Aid declaration that enables us to recover the Gift Aid from the Government.

Is the school doing well? We think the figures speak for themselves: 500 girls, 58 past pupils currently at secondary school, graduates going into careers, 100 adults being taught. And the school gets praise from the Anglican diocese and the state authorities – both of which use our school as their base for bringing together schools and churches from the surrounding area.



Thank you all so much for enabling our Under Tree Schools charity to continue to fund this very successful initiative!

From the Under Tree Schools Trustees:

Geoffrey Barnett
Peter Boyling
Helen Chauncy
Ron Sullam