

Rev. Joseph and Mrs Karin Ayok-Loewenberg
38 Comberton Avenue
Kidderminster, Worcs. DY10 3EG
UK
Tel: 0044 (0) 1562 637 645
Email: ayokloewenberg@fastmail.fm
<http://www.undertreeschools.org>



Dear Friends

October 2011



Karin and the girls visited Juba in May for a big family wedding, and in June Karin travelled to Juba on her own just before the independence of South Sudan. The Republic of South Sudan is now the 193rd country in the world. That time and also afterwards has been marked with colourful celebrations and great joy, but also with big questions and uncertainty about the challenges ahead. South Sudan has become

one of the poorest countries with the highest maternal mortality, also less than 1 % of children finish primary school, and 84 % of women are illiterate. We've seen the increase in living costs over some time, but it is rising very steeply. This puts huge burdens on families. Challenges like the dispute over the oil revenue continue, also the oil from the South Sudan is processed in the North. The North closed the pipelines, so South Sudan has little petrol. People queue for petrol long hours and many petrol stations are closed. Southerners are continuing to return from the North to the South. But changes in the currency add to the financial hardships as South Sudan has now its own currency. Also, the draught in the region has



had an impact, not as much as it has in Ethiopia and Kenya, but again prices are being pushed up. UTS trustees have to continually adapt our school budget, the running and building costs have greatly increased. A 50 kg bag of cement has doubled in price, it stands now at \$ 60. The North closed its borders 3 weeks after independence, so most of the essential building material and food has to be imported from East Africa. Additionally, July is the height of the rain season, so roads are not easily passable.

Here are some political updates: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14849100>
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/28/us-sudan-southerners-idUSTRE78R2PQ20110928>



It was very special for Karin and the girls to meet many of our "old" pupils, they are now young adults and some are working in Juba. Meeting Barnaba who helped in the initial years of UTS was wonderful, and the girls remembered when he used to carry them on his shoulders on our walks around Malek in 2005. Recently, we have also been in touch with Dick Steuart from America. He was instrumental in teachers' training and developing the school during the war. He hopes to join Joseph on his next visit in April 2012.

We are happy to hear that everyone at the school is in good spirit. The teaching staff is working well together. The parents' association is active and the school is very much appreciated by the local community. They strongly affirm our focus on girls' education.

Deng, one of our former pupils

Earlier in the year, the trustees approved extra funding to supplement the children and staff meals with offering meat once per week. Soon after that the food prices increased a lot, so we are happy to be able to help the families in a small way. The World Food Programme gives the school some food for the children as our role in supplying the children with one good meal / day is very important. Remember that the children walk between 1 – 2 hours to come to school and walk home. Adult education and bible studies continue, and thanks to the solar system with the light in the evening we can continue to offer these classes.

The building of a small chicken farm is progressing well. While the children will learn how to look after animals, it is also a step towards self-reliance for the school in the future.

The Chaplaincy church that started at our school is doing well. Samuel, our fulltime Pastor and Santo, our lay reader are working with the church community. It would be lovely to have the means to build a chapel as for now the services are held in the teachers' meeting room or under a tree during the dry season.

Our Annual Supporters' Meeting takes place on **Saturday, 5th November in St. Cecilia's Church in Kidderminster**, starting with a light lunch at 12.30 pm, followed by updates on the school and the situation in South Sudan, and looking at our plans for the future. We end with coffee at 3 pm.

Please let us know if you can come, so we can plan for the right quantities of food!

How to get to St. Cecilia's Church: <http://www.stgeorgeskidderminster.org.uk/contact-us/find-us/>

From the train station to the church is a 10 minutes walk, do let us know if you'd like to be picked up.

Our contact details are on the letterhead.

Some of you may know that we have educational material available, see details on our website. It is especially aimed for schools to use - do encourage schools in your area to have a look at it. And let us have your thoughts on how we can improve our contacts with you. We are keen to make new contacts with further schools, churches and other groups. We can offer them a relationship with a school and community in Africa, a direct link with a part of the world not many are in touch with. We are happy to come and meet interested people or groups.

Since our beginnings as a registered charity in 2007 our fundraising focus has been very much on financing capital projects – the building of the school, the accommodation for teachers, and most recently, the kitchen and dining room. While we have many hopes for future building - more classrooms, a library, residential blocks for secondary students, the farm, sports facilities, a chapel and accommodation for the chaplain – we need to make sure that we have sufficient funding to secure and sustain what we already have achieved. Only the teachers' salaries are paid by the Government in South Sudan, we cover their expenses, pay for the ancillary staff, fund training and pay for all the maintenance of the buildings. Getting the money to Malek Alel to pay for this is in itself expensive. Our current annual costs are around £ 90'000 and we would like to be able to have as close as possible to that amount in regular, committed donations. If you don't already do so, please consider setting up a regular monthly standing order for £2, £5 or £ 10 or whatever you can afford. Our website <http://www.undertreeschols.org/> has further details, or contact Glenn Scott, 42 Comberton Avenue, Kidderminster DY10 3EQ, telephone 01562 822 690 email glenn@undertreeschools.org

If you receive this newsletter by post, one thing you may be able to do to help us keep our costs down and improve our communications with you, is to let us send future newsletters to you by email. To do this simply complete the newsletter request form on our website at <http://www.undertreeschols.org/newsletter-request.html> Don't forget to tick the box saying you already receive newsletters by post and give us your postcode, otherwise you will receive both an email and a postal copy. We have recently updated our mailing list, so let us know if anything needs amending. We apologise if in error you receive a newsletter.

This comes with our appreciation and thanks for all your practical and prayerful support.
God's blessings

Karin and Joseph Ayok-Loewenberg